THE CHINESE LANTERN

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A PLAY
IN THREE ACTS

BY

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

OLANGTSI . . . . . Master of Arts

MRS. OLANGTSI (called Mrs. Back-of-de-House) . His Wife

YUNGLANGTSI . . . . . His Son

1. PEE-AH-BEE
2. HAN-KIN
3. TEE-PEE
4. HITI-TITI
5. NEW-LYN
6. NAU-TEE
7. LI-LONG

. Students, Apprentices, and Craftsmen

JOSI MOSI . . . A Chinese Jew Rag and Bone Merchant

COSI MOSI . . . . . His Brother, a Money-lender

TIKIPU . . . . . Bottle-washer and General Drudge

MEEMEE . . . . . A Korean Slave-girl

WIOWANI . . . . . An Old Master

Street-criers, Bearers, Townsfolk, etc.

ACT I

SCENE: *A Chinese Studio with windowed walls of woodwork and oil paper. At back of center a daïs, and behind that a picture showing an interior opening into a garden. In the foreground of the picture appears a hanging lantern, and below it a mandolin and a jar holding a spray of plum blossom. To the right of the stage a sliding door opens into street; to left of daïs stairs lead upward to interior, forward of that a door also to interior. It is morning; six or seven students squat painting. Between every two of them a small stand for paint pots, brushes, etc. All are very lazy and desultory at their work; the only industrious one is* TIKIPU, *who in shabby menial attire grinds colors with weary persistence. The students yawn, stretch, and whine, and only resume work in a perfunctory way at intervals upon shop signs, lanterns, etc. On the daïs sits* YUNGLANGTSI, *a mountain of indolent fat; sunk in profound reverie or slumber, he squats before his easel. Street criers are heard without calling their wares.*

1st Crier. Only ten sen! Only ten sen! Any buy?

2d Crier. Ay-ay-ay-ay-ay-eh!

1st Crier (*nearer*). Only ten sen! Any buy?

Hiti. The next person who asks me if I'll buy —I'll murder!

1st Crier (*intruding head*). Any buy?

Hiti. Get out—Mosquito! . . . Oh, Tikipu, you stagnant fool, *do* keep them out!

[TIKIPU *goes to shut door.*

Nautee. If honorable Shivering-fit has that door shut, long-suffering Foresight will go mad.

Hiti. Judging from its present whereabouts, Foresight will not have to go far.

Naut. Oh, brilliant, scintillating wit! What repartee!

Hank. Oh, firebrands of genius, don't make it any hotter than it is!

1st Crier. Only ten sen! Any buy?

[HITI *gives long-drawn exasperated sigh; 4th Student pats his back soothingly.*

Teep. There, there, Hiti, cheer up! It will soon be over. The Feast of Lanterns begins at noon. Then, on the auspicious stroke, we shut up shop. Mr. Yunglangtsi, how does your august Serenity bear the inconsiderateness of this piffling heat?

Lilong. Hush! Don't speak to him! He's inspired!

Teep. I see, as usual! This inspiration is becoming permanent!

Lilong. It is the incubation of the Event, Teepee!

Hiti. Trust what the starry oracles foretell:
Wait till the chicken taps upon the shell.

[*He taps* YUNGLANGTSI'S *head with his fan.* YUNGLANGTSI *snores softly.*

Naut. Oh, starry oracles! Did you hear that?

[YUNGLANGTSI *snores again.*

New. Ugh! When are the sanguinary Event and the starry oracle going to pay us our back wages?—that's what I want to know.

Hiti. Look not to Heaven to make or mar
Your fortunes, ye that toil!
Who hung his pot upon a star,
His broth forgot to boil.

[*He gets up and begins to roam round.*

Naut. Oh, poetry!

New. Ah! It's all very well for fancy-price first-footers like you to talk! You think it's all a subliminal joke. Still balancing yourselves on the giddy curriculum, you are; so fed up with the fat of your own fancies that you haven't found out what a tip-top, ship-shape take-in you've tumbled to!

[HITI *leans over and fans him soothingly.*

New. Ah! To you it's only a joke! But when's the value of our antediluvian premiums coming back to us? . . . What are we doing here now? Stuffing up our ears with stale old lectures we all know by heart! Just because you've come in on the giddy make-believe? Talk of the Event! Here, you hippopotamus, take that!

[*Slaps* YUNGLANGTSI *on the back.*

Teep. Really! You might have woken him.

New. That *would* be an Event, that would!

Han. Well, anyhow, the Event won't pay us—Starvation-point nought-nought-recurring — can't afford to wait for it.

Hiti. What groveling curiosity can't make out is why they should be marrying him to *her.*

Han. Why not?

Hiti. Consider what she was—a little Korean slave girl who couldn't even speak the language! And what is she now?—future bride of the incomparable Mr. Yunglangtsi, who sits there awaiting the fulfilment of his starry destiny—the oracle which announces that he is to become the greatest of living artists.

Lilong. Ugh! Olangtsi will have to be dead by then.

Hiti. Oh, no! Tiring of his exalted capacities, he will hand them on to Yunglangtsi. It will be the occasion for a fresh lecture, as thus: "Gentlemen-pupils, apprentices, and paid workmen . . ."

New. *Un*paid workmen, you mean.

Hiti. Sh! "Your immediate and polite attention—" (At the word "attention" you will lay down your brushes, fold your hands submissively, and wait.) "In the instruction which it has been my honorable privilege to bestow all these years on your stubbornly benighted intelligence—" (At these words you bow your heads) (*hits fellow-student over head with a mahl stick*) as an acknowledgment of what unprofitable stick-in-the-muds you all are) . . . "I have endeavored to set before you the traditions of Wiowani, the greatest of all the ancient Masters, whose only surviving representative and follower I am" (at the word "am" the complete Kow-tow is necessary)—"and whose last and greatest masterpiece, entitled 'The Threshold of the Muses,' here hangs before you for your instruction." (At these words you all turn

and look at the great masterpiece as though you had never seen it before.)

[*General derisive applause.* HITI, *in hitting at* NAUTEE, *knocks over paint pot.*

Naut. There, that was *your* fault!

Hiti. And *your* paint pot.

Naut. Pah! Here, swab, come and mop this foolish mess up!

[TIKIPU *goes.*

New. What meek interrogation wants to know is, when are we going to strike for our pay?

Teep. To-day, if we could catch him. He always keeps an honorable alibi when Mrs. Back-of-the-house is out.

Lilong. Oh, I wish you wouldn't go putting your blue brush into my red, you purple idiot!

Teep. (*to* TIKIPU). There, clumsy, clumsy.

[TIKIPU *stumbles.*

New. Don't spread yourself over me, you larded swine!

Naut. Get out, Goose-fat!

Students. Mangle him! Crimp him! Dibble his ribs!

Hank. Oh, empty him away somewhere! Empty him away!

[*They all beat and pelt* TIKIPU *back to his corner with pellets of bread, balls of paper, mahl sticks, etc. One throws another's shoe at him.* TIKIPU *returns to his grinding stool with meek, dogged indifference, and resumes his work. Enter behind, meanwhile,* MEEMEE, *carrying a water lily on a*

stand, which, with obeisance, she sets on the daïs in front of YUNGLANGTSI. *She is retiring again when one of the students catches sight of her.*

Teep. Oh, Meemee!

[*Beckons to her.*

Mee. (*turning with a curtsey*). Ah!—say?

Teep and Lilong. Come and sing to us! Bring us some tea!

Mee. Plesently: my merciful and mighty mistless, hon'ble Mrs. Back-of-de-house, not gone out yet!

Students. Oh!

[*Exit* MEEMEE.

Pee-Bee (*who has not spoken before*). H'm! You all thought she'd gone; I didn't. Tikipu, you had better submissively behave yourself. Bring me that shoe!

[TIKIPU *brings it.* PEE-BEE *hits him with it and puts it on.* HITI-TITI, *while roaming round the room, picks up a signboard with a hole in it, and considers it for a while with his back to the others.*

Hiti. Hanky . . . Hanky-panky . . . Does the honorable Mr. Hankin not hear?

Hank. Belated politeness, did you speak?

Hiti. Humbleness begs to inquire what Hoki-poki at the teashop said when you took him his signboard a month behind time?

Hank. He was out.

Hiti. And so with honorable caution, to secure payment, we brought it back again.

Hank. No . . . we left it.

Hiti. And he, putting his favorable foot into it, has returned it. . . . Allow me to present you with the signed article. The Hocus-pocus of Hanky-panky by Hoki-poki. (*Gives it to* HANKIN.) That's art criticism!

Hank. My usual fate: too good for the public taste.

Pee-Bee. Yes — so Mrs. Back - of - the - house thought. It was *she* who put her foot through it.

Hank. Elephant! Gray-mare-elephant!

[*Attempts to preserve his look of high disdain.*

Voice (*without*). Anything to shell to-day?

[*Enter* JOSI-MOSI.

Josi. Any bits, chips, scraps, rag, bone, old clothes? Not any? . . . Mr. Olangtsi seems not at home.

New. Well, if he is, you can't see him. . . . You take your judicious hook!

Josi. Don't want to see him . . . shay . . . no honorable gentleman got nothing to—er—to—eh? Not got any old oilskins, any old frames . . . any old lanterns . . . any old pictures not quite de fashion . . . any old . . .

Hank. Here . . . what will indigent avarice give me for that?

[*Offers damaged sign.*

Josi. Well, if you wash to throw in a pair of old shoes to pay me for my trouble . . . Yesh . . . I'd take it.

Hank. Humble but conscious merit is much obliged. . . . If it means no business, exalted abasement had better clear out. . . . There's work going on here—see?

Josi. Work?

Hank. Yes, "work" unpaid, and overtime!

Josi. Huh! Shuppose it wash *you*, den, sittin' up here at work with a light all last night—eh?—and till de morning—and de night before dat, too, ugh?

[TIKIPU *stops guiltily, raises his head and listens.*

Teep. Working all last ni—? Not in here?

Josi. It wash in here!

Teep. Tikipu, don't you still sleep here? Who was that?

Tiki (*with confusion*). That was Mr. Olangtsi. He's very busy getting his new picture finished.

Lilong. At *night*!

Tiki. Yes!—but—but he doesn't want any one to know. . . . Oh, honorable young masters, he would be very angry were you to say I told you!

Teep. Does Mare's-nest-Invention mean to tell me that superannuated capacity goes painting at night?

Tiki. Oh, yes . . . I know it. . . . Broken-slumber is kept awake by it.

Josi. And all dat trouble over putting a bit of paint and paper togedder!

Teep. Painting is a wonderful art, Mr. Josi-Mosi.

Josi. Ish it?

Teep. A picture is a very wonderful thing.

Josi. Ish it?

Teep. Yes . . . sometimes. . . . That picture illustriously behind you now . . . You know the story about that?

Josi. I knew dere wash a story. . . . I never knew dat anybody believed it—except to keep up de price.

Teep. Ah, you should get Tikipu to tell it you! He believes it . . . don't you, Tiki?

Tiki. The Master himself tells it.

Hiti. The Master himself owns the picture, stupid! . . . But go on—I always like to hear it again.

Josi. Yesh . . . go on.

Tiki. You see, it was very long ago. . . . It is easy not to believe what happened three hundred years ago.

Josi. Yesh — very eashy . . . I've found dat out. Go on!

Tiki. Wiowani, the great painter, when he painted that picture was old and tired of life, and he longed for rest. . . . So he painted a little porch and a garden; and in the porch just one spray of blossom in an old blue jar to remind him of youth, an instrument of music to remind him of song, and overhead a lantern to give light when it grew dark. . . . And when the picture was done the Emperor himself came to look at it. . . . And as he looked, he said: "Oh, Wiowani, in there, it seems to me, is rest! Would that you and I could go and live in a place like that forever!"

And while he spoke the lantern began to glow,
Softly shedding its light on the floor below.
And the garden beyond grew dim, form within form,
But all the porch was brimming and bright and warm—

A home with its doors thrown wide for a well-loved guest,
And out of the dusk of the garden a wind came, blest
With the scent of flowers, all cool from the rising dew;
And lo! in its depth at last, there, born anew,
The picture passed, and was changed to a world of rest!

Teep. Oh, go on, Tikipu, go on, go on!

Tiki. Then, all at once, Wiowani reached a hand:

"Come," he said. "Come with me! for this is the land
You seek, and thither I go!"
And into the picture he stept, and turning slow,
Watched to see
Whether the Emperor would follow, or no.
Follow? Not he! Not having the soul
Of a painter, how could he reach the goal?
So Wiowani went in by the door,
Stood, and beckoned, then turned about
And vanished away!
And the light of the lantern faded out
As fades a star at the dawn of day;
And the picture was only a picture once more!

Josi. Ugh! . . . It's a very interesting story; but I don't happen to want to buy de picture—even with Mr. Wiowani thrown in.

Hank. That's a stupid story, you know. What business has a picture with any perspective? You might as well talk of walking into a piece of music as walking into a picture.

Hiti. Ah! you are an old-fashioned purist, Han-Kin.

Hank. I'm not; I am simply a scientist. Latest science says that you can't tell whether a thing is flat or round at twenty feet distance from the eye. Stereoscopic sight is a mere accident, and only means that you have got too close to an object to treat it artistically. Paint your foregrounds as if they were twenty feet away, and keep your distances as flat as the palm of your hand, and there you have art and science rolled into one.

Teep. Ah, Hankin has been reading the old legend—the oldest of all—and he calls himself a scientist!

Hank. What old legend?

Teep. How the gods of the first creation made everything flat, and put it into a picture book which they called the Book of Life, so that they could just turn over the leaves and amuse themselves without any trouble.

Lilong. Yes—and then one day they left it out in the rain, and it got wet and began to push out of bounds and grow and swell in all directions. And so we got the world as it is—full of ups and downs, and behinds and befores, and corners that that you can't see round. Horrible, untidy, disgusting!

New. Well, but what can an artist do? He must copy it!

Lilong. Copy it! Where does Repeating-pattern find art in that? Mere pig on pork *I* call it. What art has to do is to put things back into shape as the gods originally intended. Make your pic-

ture submissively flat—and there you've got religious art. A picture that looks as if you could walk into it makes me sick. Who *wants* to walk into it? Wiowani was an exalted ass, to my thinking.

Hiti. Anyway — he wasn't an impressionist, that's one comfort.

Hank. And how does comforted ignorance define an impressionist?

Hiti. Any blinkered fool who can't see an outline, and couldn't draw it if he did.

[*Grins through damaged signboard.*

Hank. If presumptuous Incapacity imagines that innuendo can prevent art from following science——

Hiti, Peeb., Liling, New. (*together*). Follow science—follow fiddlesticks—follow its nose! Art can't follow anything: it's a law to itself. Art is the handmaid of Religion: Science has nothing whatever to do with it. Science be——

Teep. Oh, it's no use quarreling about theories. We all paint either what we think will tell, or what we think will sell—those are the only two schools *I* know of. If you are a naturalist, you paint pink flesh and green trees.

New. Naturally!

Teep. If a luminist, blue flesh and pink trees.

Hank. Certainly!

Teep. If a symbolist, green flesh and brown trees. If you are a vibrantist you see spots, if a chiaroscurist you see blots, if you are academic you use hard outlines and polished surfaces and call it "finish."

Lilong. No, I don't!

Hiti. Yes, he does.

Teep. If an impressionist, you avoid outlines, leave an accidental surface, and call it quality. But you all really *see* exactly alike——

All. We don't.

Teep. The thing is sometimes to avoid seeing. Pee-Ah-Bee does it by screwing his nose into his canvas and painting by his sense of touch.

Hiti. Don't be touchy, Pee-Ah-Bee, your nose *was* there. There's paint on it.

Teep. Hanky-panky does it at arm's length with his eyes shut, finding his accidental effects so much better than his scientific ones. Newlyn does it on sea air and pilchards, wears a tarpaulin and paints with a catspaw in a southwest wind.

New. I do it on my own, anyhow!

Pee-Bee. While Tee-Pee's art consists in always starting brilliantly on some new sort of paper, putting his initials on it, and then dropping it for another sort.

Josi. And Mrs. Back-of-de-house does like Mr. Wiowani: as soon as a picture is finished she walks into it.

[*General laughter.*

Lilong. Sh-h-h!

[*Without* MRS. OLANGTSI'S *voice is heard, raised in anger, loud and voluble.*

Mrs. O. Wait? No, I won't wait! Get out of it! Wasting your time all day over stuff like that! If you can't work yourself, go and make others do it for you. . . . Your Art? . . . Your fiddlesticks!

[*All slink back to their places.* JOSI MOSI *shuffles off with his pickings.*

[*Enter* MRS. OLANGTSI, *followed by* OLANGTSI. MRS. O. *threads her way through obsequiously shifted easel, toward* TIKIPU, *and fetches him a box on the ear.*

Mrs. O. Take that!

[TIKIPU *winces, but goes on grinding, glancing round apprehensively as she retires.* OLANGTSI *follows at her heels, showing himself a careful understudy of all her masterful ways.*

Olang. Yes, that!

[*Boxes* TIKIPU *as though the initiative were his own.*

Mrs. O. So you pretend you've all been hard at work, do you? (*To Students.*)

Olang. Aye, you may pretend, but you don't deceive *me*!

Teep. (*ignoring* OLANGTSI). August Lady, we were only correcting Tikipu for his persistent indolence. The commotion which you heard just now was caused by his resistance. We now perceive that correction on *our* part was superfluous.

Olang. Superfluous? Of course! I can chastise Tikipu for myself—as much as I think necessary—that is, with assistance from the right quarter. (HAN-KIN *conceals signboard.*) Gentlemen, your immediate and polite attention——

Mrs. O. (*to* HAN-KIN). Yes—you'd better put it out of sight! Any more things like that, and out of this shop you go.

Olang. Yes, anything more of *that* kind, and you leave my studio instantly.

Mrs. O. Shop, I said.

Olang. Studio is more correct.

Mrs. O. Shop!

Olang. Shop as far as you are concerned, my dear; and, of course, shop as far as *he* is concerned. Understand—

Out of this shop
Neck and crop!

That's a rhyme, my dear. . . . I don't know any rhyme to studio.

Mrs. O. Nor I. You'd better begin your lecture, instead of wasting time arguing with me.

[MRS. OLANGTSI *starts labeling a row of lanterns.*

Olang. Yes, yes—as I was about to remark, gentlemen, pupils, and—and others, your immediate and polite attention. The instruction it has so long been my assiduous effort to bestow on your—ah—slowly dawning intelligences, is to-day relaxed when at the stroke of noon we start to celebrate the Feast of Lanterns—the Feast of those lanterns which are so largely supplied from this emporium of the arts.

Mrs. O. Shop.

Olang. Yes—as I was saying—shop. But before we turn to scenes of distraction and relaxation, I am here once more to remind you of your high and privileged calling in the traditions of Wiowani, the greatest of all the ancient Masters, whose only surviving follower and representative I am, and whose last and greatest masterpiece here stands before you for your instruction.

[*Students turn;* NAU-TEE *knocks over* HITI'S *paint pot.*

Hiti. Propinquitous idiot!

Olang. This august picture, as you all know——

Yung. (*awakening*). I want my tea, I'm waiting for my tea—tea—tea—tea!

Mrs. O. (*going to inner door*). Meemee, bring in the tea! (*To* Josi.) Oh, you are there, are you? Here, take that rubbish away! (*Gives him signboard.*) When's that money-lender man of yours coming? (*Aside.*)

Josi. Preshently. He's going to see de public executions first—den he'll come.

Yung. Executions? When are the executions, Josi Mosi?

Josi. Twelve o'clock, of course, before de Feast commenshes. You'll see 'em. Dey come dish way.

Yung. Phwit! Ha, ha!

[*Slaps his knee.*

Olang. Ach, you low fellow! That wakes you, does it? That amuses you! Oh, what's the use of trying to make an artist of you?

Yung. *I* didn't want to be an artist. I wanted to be a grocer. I *was* a grocer once. I am still.

Olang. How dare you say so? How dare you?

Yung. The certificate says so; I've got the certificate. See! That says——

[*He produces certificate.*

Olang. It says nothing! (*Snatching it.*) Your name is not on it.

Yung. Because you painted it out!

Olang. It no longer concerns you! In future you will please to let it alone.

[*Pockets it.*

Yung. You always disliked me, father!

Olang. I didn't *always* dislike you! How dare you say that? I dislike your manners—who wouldn't? I dislike your tastes, I dislike your appearance, and I dislike your character. . . . More than that I—I—don't say.

Yung. He's taken my certificate!

[*Whimpering.*

Mrs. O. What have you taken his certificate for? Let him have it, if it amuses him!

Yung. It was red; it had white letters on it—and it said——

Olang. My dear, do you not know that in this country for a grocer to be also an artist is illegal, and *can you not see* that if you allow him always to go fancying himself a grocer he will never become a painter?

Yung. It said——

Mrs. O. No, I can't; there's no sense in it! You are always saying what Art wants is imagination. Well—let him practice imagining himself a grocer.

[*Enter* MEEMEE *from house.*

Yung. It said I was to be a grocer, not an artist!

Mrs. O. Here! (*To* JOSI.) You can go. Tell him as soon after twelve as he can.

Josi. I'll bring him.

[*Exit* JOSI.

Mee. Will any of you condescensions tea? Have some? (*To* YUNGLANGTSI, *who on taking it stops whimpering.*) Tank! . . . Have some? . . . Tank? (*She goes round offering to all in turn in the same words.*) Have some? . . . Tank!

Mrs. O. (*aside to* OLANG.). See that they are all gone before he comes!

Olang. Gone? Gone? I shan't be able to get them to go—not till I have paid them!

Mrs. O. Yes, you will—there's the execution. Say you'll pay them to-night.

Olang. I've said that sometimes before.

Mrs. O. Say it again. If they don't believe you, you can shout it; if they still don't believe you, whisper it.

[MEEMEE, *coming behind, waits for* MRS. OLANGTSI'*s attention.*

Olang. Will that?

Mrs. O. Yes, if you do it properly.

Mee. High hon'ble Mrs. Back-of-the-house not have any?

Mrs. O. No! Take it away!

Mee. Not any next nice new order? No? Tank!

[*Crosses to* TIKI. *He shakes his head apprehensively.*

Mrs. O. What are you doing there?

Mee. Mos' hon'ble! only to make it go de whole way roun'—not to waste it.

Mrs. O. Take it away! Go and get my shoes ready, and my big sunshade, so that I can get out before the shops shut. (*Exit* MEE.) Tikipu, as soon as you've done what you are at, take round those lanterns; the labels are all on them. Don't leave them at the wrong doors; and mind, whatever they say, you're to wait for the money.

Olang. Yes, recollect you are to wait for the money.

Mrs. O. Now, Olangtsi, you can get on with your lecture, and be done with it before I come back.

[*Exit into house.*

[*Signal passes between* STUDENTS; *they fold up their easels.*

Olang. Gentlemen, your immediate and polite attention. . . . Where was I? What had I got to?

New. "Wait for the money" was Eloquence's last hopeful remark. It is what we are all doing now.

Olang. Silence!

Lilong. Mr. Olangtsi, we do not want your lecture! We want our wages: those wages which, Apology begs to point out, are in honorable arrears.

Olang. Of course, of course! Well, you shall have your money. (*They extend their palms.*) Do you think that I am not going to pay you?

[HITI *and* NAU-TEE *look on grinning.*

Hank. No . . . on the contrary, we think that you *are*!

Olang. You shall be paid to-night.

Teep. It will then be the Feast, during which, as Affluence is no doubt honorably aware, no legal debt is recoverable. . . . Mr. Olangtsi, labor itself is pleasing to us, but the needful is also necessary. How can we feast if our pockets be empty?

Olang (*shouts*). I tell you—you shall be paid to-night!

Peeb. By to-night Mrs. Back-of-the-house will have returned. Considerate Master, it makes a difference; before you we can uplift the voice of complaint, which at the blast of *her* nostrils becomes dumb.

Olang (*whispering*). I tell you, you shall be paid to-night.

Hank. (*after gathering the approval of the others*). We accept. But as an honorable precaution—since in the meanwhile Mrs. Back-of-the-house may have returned—we will save Scrub-and-run-errands the trouble of delivering those lectures. We will deliver them ourselves—and collect the money!

Olang. Indeed, you will do no such thing! Tikipu, take in those lanterns!

[TIKIPU *is set upon. He holds the lanterns over his head. His arm is dragged down.*

Olang. But, gentlemen, this will be very awkward for me! I consider it a most—a most ungentlemanly proceeding! When my wife hears of it she will——

[*Reënter* MRS. OLANGTSI. *They all collapse back into their places.*

Mrs. O. Tikipu, bring on those lanterns and call a coolie. I'll see to them myself. (*Exit* TIKIPU *with lanterns.*) Oh, so the lecture's finished, is it? Well, then, you'd better all get on with your work; and you, Olangtsi, you come with me. . . . You can all go at twelve.

[*Meekly followed by* OLANGTSI, *she sallies forth into street.*

Teep. Well, really!

Hank. If that green Elephant thinks that she can trample upon me!

Hiti. Dear Hanky-pancake—she's done it!

Lilong. Oh, don't talk about it, it's too consecutively sickening!

[*Enter* MEEMEE. *She clears away cups, looks inquiringly at each student as she does so.*

Mee. H'm! Me tink you all velly sad to-day?

Teep. (*lugubriously*). It's the Feast of Lanterns, Meemee.

Mee. H'm! Dat not sad.

New. Yes, it is, if you've no money to spend on it.

[*Reënter* TIKIPU. *He goes back to his work, ignoring* MEEMEE.

Mee. What for you want to spend money? You talk, you walk, you run about and you play, you sing and you dance. Dat evellyting to make you happy—in de worl'.

Lilong. How can one sing if one's nothing to sing about?

Mee. You sing about yo'self. All de worl' sing about itself: how nice to be oneself. Dat not true? I sing—I show you! (*She prepares center of stage for dance and song.*) Dis goin' to be velly beautiful, but it cost noting! Dere's a river; dere's a lily; an' dis is me. And dere is you all lookin' like ducks on de water, yes. . . . Now!

[*Takes guitar and sings.*

Will you have a sing-song, a sing-song, a sing-song?
Cly de ducks a-quacking on de Ying Kai banks.
Any song day *you* sing—sho' to be de wrong song?
S'all I no sing you any song? No t'anks!

Lill golden lily dat is lying in de water,
Golden lily willy-nilly holding to de banks;
Lift up yo' head an' see de Chi'man's daughter;
Tiptoe she go—just so. No t'anks.
Lill golden lily wid yo' open eye a-winking,
All de while you wonder why de worl' so ill at ease!
What has you been hopin' fo'? What has you been tinking?
What you say you want? Pick-me-quick? Yes, please!
(*Speaks.*) Lill golden lily! Ah, ho! (*She picks the flower and puts it into her hair.*) Dat's all you'll hear about it—dis time. Wish you so happy Feast! Goo' by!

[*Runs off laughing.*

Students. Meemee, come back! Meemee, Meemee!

Yung. (*awaking*). Who was making that *beastly* row? (*Drums of execution procession are heard.*) What's that?

Teep. (*looking out*). It's the execution! Ah, ha! Here they come!

Yung. Who-whoop! Who-whoop!

[*Exeunt all, except* TIKIPU, *in great haste.*

[TIKIPU *throws himself forward over the stand where he has been grinding, and buries his face in his arms. Enter* MEEMEE; *she advances sympathetically, but timidly.*

Mee. Tiki . . . Tikipu. . . . Have dey been beating you again? Eh? (*Goes up to him.*) Tiki, what is you clying for? (*Touches him.*) You clying?

Tiki. (*rousing himself with an effort*). No, I wasn't crying, Meemee; I was only asleep. . . . Crying! Ha! (*He gets up.*) Everyone gone?

Mee. Yes . . . dere's de to-be-made-dead men jus' gone by! . . . Oh, hear! Oh, see! (*She runs to door and peeps out.* TIKI *crosses to picture and sits gazing at it.*) Oh, look, Tiki, dere's a big pig lying asleep out in de street! All de people go by —he not care—he sleep.

Tiki. H'm! . . . Like Yunglangtsi—eh?

Mee. Oh . . . you *wicked*! Hee, hee, hee! Yes—he Yunglangtsi—just dat! . . . (*To the pig outside.*) Say! You waitin' for yo' little wife to come? Plaps she mally some one else while you waitin', eh? Grrr! Grrr! (*She shuts door.*) Hee, hee, hee, hee! You don't like Yunglangtsi?

Tiki. (*yawning*). Do you?

Mee. Mm-yah! When he sleep . . . he seem velly nice. Me not like him, plaps, if he wake too much! . . . Tiki, you 'sleep, too? . . . Say?—you sittin' up all las' night?

Tiki. Sitting up?

Mee. (*nods*). M'm . . . she know: she lie awake an' watch de light, den she go to sleep—plaps. Den she wake. . . . De light still dere. . . . Tiki, what de matter wid you? (*Shakes him.*) Is you in love?

Tiki. (*rousing himself*). In lo— Oh, it's no use telling you, Meemee; you wouldn't understand. You are only a woman.

Mee. H'm! . . . Onl' . . . Dat velly big only! . . . dat half de worl'. . . . What is yo'self? . . . Only a man! You isn't *quite* a man—yet—else you never say foolish ting like dat! . . . "Only!"

Tiki. Ah, well! I mean it's a secret, something you don't know anything about. There are many mysteries in the world, Meemee—this one is mine.

Mee. Mistless—yo' mistless? Some one bigger than Mrs. Back-of-de-house?

Tiki. Yes, bigger than Mrs. Back-of-the-house!

Mee. Dat possible? No! . . . Tiki? . . .

Tiki. Yes? Well?

Mee. Me got seclet too; one gleat big seclet! And oh—so nice! . . . One you not know, Tiki . . . eh? . . . Man dat sol' me know . . . man dat bought me know. Nobody else know—at all. . . . Me velly vallable!

Tiki. (*indifferently*). Oh, I dare say! . . . Here! Meemee, stay as you are! (*Takes up drawing board from* YUNGLANGTSI'S *easel.*) I'll do your portrait. This is Yunglangtsi's, there's nothing on it. He'll think he did it in his sleep. . . .

[*He starts sketching. She stands smiling.*

Mee. H'm! Tink he's bin havin' nice dream, den!

Tiki. What was it brought you here, Meemee?

Mee. Money!

Tiki. What? D'you mean to say you've got money?

Mee. Not no—noting dat kind, leas' little bit at all.

Tiki. But you said——

Mee. No—say noting like that! Me bought wife for dat man's son to mally. Not nice thought dat—eh, what?

Tiki. But why ever does he want to marry *you,* Meemee?

Mee. H'm—dat my lill seclet! Though me got no money left, me born under star—star say man dat mally me gleat artis'. He no artis' now, eh? He only got to mally me—den he become! See?

Tiki. Oh! So that is why he always sits idle and never works? It's all going to be done for him!

Mee. Yes, so! Jus' waitin' fo' me to come and make him big artis'.

Tiki. And when is that to be?

Mee. When de star come say right time—den mally.

Tiki. How soon?

Mee. Oh! not for long time yet—t'ree year.

Tiki. I suppose the star makes the date very particular?

Mee. Evellybody velly particular. Me not velly particular. Star say me got to mally gleat artis'. H'm gleat artis' not velly good husband, me tink.

Tiki. Oh, yes! Why not? Look at Mr. Olang-tsi. He's a very good husband, in a way.

Mee. He gleat artis'?

Tiki. He *was*, Meemee; he's a little old now.

Mee. He mally under star, eh?

Tiki. There! that's finished now.

[*He puts down drawing board.*

Mee. Oh, dat wonderful!

Tiki. Don't you tell, mind! Now, off with you! We'll leave it here for Yunglangtsi. (*Starts tidying up.*) Some one's coming, Meemee.

[*Exit* MEEMEE; TIKIPU *passes into pantry.*

[*Enter* JOSI *and* COSI MOSI.

Josi. Any one in? . . . Come in, Coshi. . . . Dere'sh only de boy! Take a look at de furniture, now you've got de chance. Dat's de picture—over dere. . . . And don't forget you give me ten per cent on what you make from de introduction, Coshi.

Cosi. That won't do. 'Tisn't worth it. Five.

Josi. Coshi, I'm your only brother; split de difference and make it nine.

Cosi. What's the good of your being my brother, when you are so shabby I can't own you?

Josi. Ugh! Dere ain't much to choose between you and me for shabbiness, Coshi; I've got a shabby coat, but you've got a shabby shoul—dat's all. . . . How much did you say?

[TIKIPU *enters.*

Cosi. Five's my figure.

Josi. Five's mine. . . . What do you think of de picture?

[TIKIPU *starts.*

Cosi. Seems genuine enough, but I wouldn't give 300 yen for *dat.* Dat style's gone out of fashion now.

[*Reënter* MEEMEE.

Tiki. You—you are not going to take away that picture, are you?

Cosi. Why not?

Tiki. Oh!

Cosi. 'Tisn't yours, is it?

Mee. (*removing cup*). If yo' please! Tank!

Cosi. Hello! Who's dat?

[*Exit* MEEMEE.

Josi. Dat's de little gel I told you about. Dey bought her seven years ago.

Cosi. She'd be a good security, she would. In three years' time she'd be a good bargain for me. . . . (*To* TIKIPU, *derisively.*) Does dat—dat gel belong to you, too?

[TIKIPU *shakes his head indifferently.*

[*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. OLANGTSI.

Mrs. O. Oh, you've come earlier than you said. Well, you've told him what we want? Here (*to* TIKI, *who shows sudden interest*), you can go and wait outside.

[*Exit* TIKIPU.

Josi. Yesh, I've told him.

Mrs. O. What did you say his name was?

Josi. Mr. Coshi Mosi—name fifty per shent the same, but no relation. Go on—you tell him what you want.

Mrs. O. Three hundred yen's what I want. Have you got it?

Cosi. Have I got it? Yesh—*you* haven't: that's the point! Next point—have you got anything that'll cover it?

Olang. Of course! My word is my bond. I will give you my word——

Mrs. O. Hold your tongue!

Cosi (*ignoring* OLANGTSI). How long d'you want it for?

Mrs. O. Three years.

Cosi. What's your security?

Mrs. O. Everything you see here.

Cosi. Not enough.

Mrs. O. There's a picture.

[*Points over shoulder.*

Cosi. Yesh, I've seen dat.

Olang. Understand, that is a most valuable picture! I would not part from it for any sum you like to name!

Cosi. I wouldn't like to name any sum. It's out of date, and it's in a bad state of preservation.

Olang. Then you know nothing about it! Its preservation is perfect.

Cosi. Dat's what I mean: it's been *over*-preserved; it ought to have been destroyed long ago. . . . Have you got nothing better than that to raise money on?

Olang. Than that? No.

Mrs. O. Than that? Yes! Have you never heard of our son, Yunglangtsi?

Cosi. No.

Mrs. O. Well, I'll tell you. Seven years ago his future was foretold from the stars. In three years from now he'll have become the greatest of living artists.

Josi (*aside*). Don't you believe it, Coshi.

Cosi. Is he making a living now?

Mrs. O. He's alive. What more do you want?

Josi. Don't you believe dat either, Cosi. He's only half alive.

[*Aside.*

Cosi. Can you show me any of his work?

Josi (*aside*). Dat's got 'em!

Mrs. O. No, I can't, and for a good enough reason, too. Every picture he paints he sells right away.

Olang. That is true; we have not a single piece of his work unsold.

Cosi. Very good. Den when he's got a piece to sell I'll call again and look at it. . . . Good morning.

Olang. (*suddenly catching sight of the drawing*). Stop! . . . Look—look here, my dear. This is most extraordinary! Here is something that has not been sold.

Mrs. O. Ah! Now, say what you like! Look at that!

[*Enter* YUNGLANGTSI, *making gesture of execution with his hand, he shuffles in, chuckling.*

Yung. Phit! Phit! Ah, ha! I've been to the executions, mother. Three of them were hanged and two had their heads cut off! They did make such funny faces! Phit! . . .

[*Goes and squats.*

Olang. How could he have done it? Why, it's —it's wonderful! . . . When did you do this?

Yung. Do that? Why, that's Meemee, of course.

Josi. Yes, that's Meemee, right enough.

Mrs. O. There, that shows you!

Olang. The star! The star! It is the beginning of the Event. This day three years it will come true!

Mrs. O. (*aside*). Don't be a fool! *He* never did that. It was one of the others.

Cosi. Here, about dish money; dat little gel—why've you said nothing about her? She belong to you, eh?

Mrs. O. Yes. Well?

Yung. Meemee belongs to *me*: you may take Meemee, if you'll give me back my certificate!

Olang. Be silent!

Cosi. Well, make a security of her and you shall have de money—wid de other securities, too, mind you; dere's no knowing—she might die.

Olang. Meemee a security! No, no, that is impossible!

Mrs. O. Why is it impossible, I should like to know?

Josi (*to* Cosi). Leave dem alone. You've got her.

[*They retire.*

Olang. But, my dear, we—we can't risk it!

Mrs. O. Stuff! I know what I'm about.

Olang. If before this day three years Meemee goes out of our hands unmarried . . .

Mrs. O. She won't . . . this day three years is the very day. Before we let her go she'll *be* married. Before she goes from here we shall have . . . got the value.

Olang. Oh! Ah, I never thought of that!

Mrs. O. You never would.

Cosi. Well? Have you agreed?

Mrs. O. Yes.

Olang. Yes—we have agreed.

Cosi. All right: den, now let's get it into form. (*Puts on spectacles.*) Three hundred yen for three years at twenty per cent—as from to-day.

Mrs. O. Money down.

Cosi. Count it out, Josi; you'll find it dere. . . . (*Aside.*) It's de exact amount, Josi; you need only pretend to count it. (Cosi *starts to fill up form.* Josi, *disappointed of pickings, counts money.*) De first shecurity is de gel—which is your own property? Name?

Josi. Meemee . . . you spell it with an M.

Cosi. Meemee—to be handed over on demand if the loan is not repaid—with all interest due—dis day tree year—dat is, the Feast of Lanterns. . . . De second shecurity is de picture—your own property? Entitled?

Josi. "De Threshold of de Muses."

Cosi. By?

Josi. Mr. Wiowani.

Cosi. Living artist?

Josi. Deceased—date of death not known.

Cosi. Third shecurity . . . all furniture and household effects, private and professional, belonging to Mr. Olangtsi. . . . You call yourself an artist, eh?

Olang. I do . . . that is . . . yes.

Cosi. Artist . . . of . . . so . . . so . . . so. . . . Date, de . . . yes. Dere! Dat's all right! . . . Now, if you sign dis, I give you de money.

Olang. But, if by any chance I should be unable to repay . . . then you take all that I have?

Cosi. No, I don't. . . . De girl and de picture togedder will cover de amount. . . . If de girl should die . . . well, of course, if the girl should die . . . den you won't be so well off.

Olang. You see, my dear . . .

Mrs. O. Sign it!

Olang. Very well . . . I . . . I sign, but I sign under protest. . . . What do I do?

Cosi. You deliver this as your act and deed.

Olang. I deliver this as my act and deed—and I—I wash my hands of all responsibility in the matter!

Cosi. All right . . . dere's de money.

[*Hands bag.*

Mrs. O. I hope you've brought it in silver? Ah, yes. Because there's the week's wages to be paid to-night.

Olang. The whole quarter's, my dear.

Mrs. O. Will you hold your tongue! . . .

Cosi. Well, dat's all. . . . Honorable good day to you and a fortunate Feast.

Mrs. O. Honorable good day.

Olang. Honorable good day. Condescend to overeat yourself, and greatly oblige.

[*Exit* Cosi.

Mrs. O. Now, after this you'd better give up painting pictures that won't sell! It's no use burning your candle at both ends if you can't make them meet.

Josi. Yesh, he was burning his candle last night! Got de picture finished, eh? You might have thrown dat into de shecurity as well.

Mrs. O. He's not getting any picture finished. What d'you mean?

Josi. Oh, ah! We wash to pretend we didn't know. All right . . . de candle was burning to amuse itself, I shuppose!

Olang. A candle? . . . Burning? . . . Where?

Josi. In here.

Olang. When?

Josi. Last night . . . when I went to bed dere was a light . . . when I got up dere was a light. Now, Honorable Mrs. Back-of-the-house, dere's my little commission, please, for de introduction. . . . How much did we shay it was to be?

Olang. In here, you say? . . . Last night? . . .

Josi. Yesh, and oder nights ash well! . . . Ten shen, I tink we said, eh?

Mrs. O. (*looking fixedly at* OLANGTSI). Five, I said.

Josi. Five!

Mrs. O. (*putting down money*). There's five for you; it's either that or none. Now you be off! Ah, there's the Feast begun!

[*Bells start clanging.*

Josi. Aye, dere's de Feasht. "Eat meat!" it shays, "drink wine!

[*Bells.*

"Drink, drink, drink! and be happy, all you shwine!"

[*Bells.*

[*Exit* JOSI.

Olang. A light in here! In here there has been a light,

[*Bells.*

Burning until the dawn all through the night!

Mrs. O. Yes, we know that. D'you mean it wasn't you?

Olang. A light, a light, a light! Ah! if it's true,
What does it mean?

Mrs. O. Means some one's been about
Where he'd no right to be. Now we've found out,
We'll make him smart for it!

Olang. Make who? Make who?

Mrs. O. Why, who is it that sleeps here?

Olang. Tikipu!
What! Tikipu . . . you think that it was he?

Mrs. O. That's to be proved. . . . Wait till to-night and see. . . .
Do nothing . . . say nothing. . . . Don't let him guess
That you know anything at all. The less
You say the better!

[*Exit* Mrs. O.

[*Bells.*

Olang. Ah! A light! A light!
What does it mean? Well, I shall know to-night!
Chorus (*without*). (*Bells at intervals.*)
Ching-a-ring-a-ring-ting, Feast of Lanterns,
Sing the song, and set the gong to sound round the town!
Up and out, and all about, now every man that can turns;
China shall catch fire when the sun goes down!

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *Opens after sunset.* MEEMEE *is discovered lighting up the studio.* STUDENTS *enter from house. They run round after each other's tails in a cat-prowling fashion, singing in high good humor.*

Students (*in round of chorus*).

Mew-cats, mew-cats, come and take a walk!
Mew-cats, mew-cats, come and have a talk!
Catch your catch, as cat's can! Who can catch me now?
What you at, scratch cat? Phit! Phat! Miaow!
[*Dance.*

Teep. (*rubbing his hands*). Ah, ha!

New. (*slapping his pockets*). Ha, ha!

The Rest. Hee-hee!

Mee. What you all laughing 'bout nothing for?

Teep. We are all in a very good temper to-night, Meemee—we've been paid!

Mee. Dat so?

Teep. Yes—to the last sen! Isn't that wonderful?

Mee. Velly nice, me tink.

Teep. And so, Meemee (*takes box from* LI-LONG), here's a little present for you which self-sacrificing generosity has been long intending.
[*Presents a box of sweets.*

Mee. Oh, hon'ble nicenesses, awfully to condescen'!

Hiti. They are sweets, Meemee.

Naut. We hope they are good; but we haven't tried them.

Mee. (*offering box*). Graciously to inspect humbleness invite! (*They help themselves in turn, without scruple or limit.*) Me hope dey quite good enough—to yo' taste?

Teep. Very good indeed, Meemee. . . . Thank you. . . . Yes, as I was saying, we've been paid.

Lilong. And so we have promised——

Peeb. What do you think?

New. Why, to take Yunglangtsi in the procession with us.

Hank. As a walking advertisement.

Mee. He not going to walk all de way?

New. Oh, no!

Lilong. We are going to have him carried in a chair of state—quite grand, like a mandarin.

Peeb. And we shall go in front and behind. We are going to get the chair now.

Hank. Have all the lanterns lighted for us, Meemee, when we come back.

Mee. Say? How long will de procession last?

Teep. Till dawn, Meemee, till dawn! Then the lanterns go out, and we all run home like cats.

Hiti. Like cats, Meemee, holding on to each other's tails—for some of us won't be able to walk straight by then! Come, pussy cats . . .

Chorus.

Mew-cats, mew-cats, all fit and fat,
Mew-cats, mew-cats, what will you be at?
Tit-for-tat, kit-for-cat—can't you have enough?

[*They imitate a cat's fight.*

Catch your catch and catch again! Phit! Phat! Fuff!

[*They dance off, holding each other's pig-tails.*

[*Meanwhile* YUNGLANGTSI *has entered, dull and ponderous. He squats disconsolately on a bench, sitting on his heels or cross-legged, and looks at* MEEMEE *with a sort of sulky possessiveness.*

Yung. Come to me here, Meemee! Come and talk to me!

Mee. Ya-as! What sort of talky-talky serenity like best?

Yung. Any silly chatter will do, so long as you talk.

Mee. Hon'ble Mr. Yunglangtsi not velly happy to-night?

Yung. I'm bored, Meemee, I'm bored!

Mee. You been changin' yo' clo's?

Yung. I was made to, Meemee; mother made me . . . so did my father. . . . I don't belong to myself, Meemee. . . . I'm a human sacrifice.

Mee. Dey look mos', mos' beautiful. . . . You jus' like a big lantern all on fire! . . . When you go in de procession—all de little bat-moths and bobby-howlers fly up again you—so! And burn deyselves fo' dey know where dey are! Hee, hee!

Yung. Do you think that funny, Meemee?

Mee. Rader funny, don' you tink?

Yung. You are very silly, Meemee.

Mee. Ya-as, me velly silly—me know dat! Not evellybody so gleat wise person as Mr. Yunglangtsi, h'm? H'm?

Yung. You think I like you, Meemee, don't you?

Mee. Ya-as—a leetle.

Yung. Well, I don't, then. . . . I dislike you . . . there's no one I dislike more. . . . Shall I tell you why?

Mee. If you please.

Yung. It's because you've robbed me—yes, *you,* you shabby little interloper. I'm not the man I was once; you don't know anything about me. . . . Till you came here with that confounded horoscope of yours, I was happy—I'd reason to be, *then.* . . . D'you know what I was? (*She shakes her head.*) A grocer! . . . I suppose you don't know what that means? Well, it means sitting in a great shop where people come to buy, and giving orders to everybody. And all round you there are barrels of oil, with taps that run, and casks of sugar, and tea by the ton; and bins of rice and boxes of spice, and everything nice as nice can be! And a crushing machine where things are ground, and the samples all have a different sound. And you plunge your arms in flour or meal; and if you can't see what it is—*you can feel*!

Mee. Oh, how beautiful!

Yung. And soap, Meemee! Oh, there's a fortune to be made out of soap alone! There was a man once, Meemee, who spent three years inventing the name of a soap. . . . And when he'd invented it, he turned it into a syndicate and sold it—he sold it for 20,000 yen.

Mee. De *name*?

Yung. Yes, the name. What the soap was didn't matter so long as it had a good name. That's real art, Meemee, and that's what being a grocer means. . . . That's what *I* was once!

Mee. You? Oh, poo' man, to lose all dat!

Yung. Yes, I'd got my full grocer's certificate. I'd taken five years to earn it, and I was so proud of it! I used to wear it round my neck so that everyone could see. . . . It had white letters, on a red ground, and it said. . . . (*He breaks down.*) And all because of you and your stars, they've gone and taken it off me! . . . I tell you they'd given up trying to turn me into an artist; they'd found it was no good. And then *you* came, you—you—you superfluous little pig!—and now I've got to wait till your beastly star comes round again—three years—and then I've got to marry you and become a fool of a painter—when I might have been a grocer—if you'd only stayed away!

Mee. Oh! me velly, velly solly! Me 'bominably not wanted, eh?

Yung. My father doesn't understand me, Meemee! . . . No one understands me. . . . You don't understand me, either.

Mee. Me tink—yes! Have *a* sweet!

[*Offers box.*

Yung. Thank you, Meemee. . . . I think you do understand me a little. . . . When I was a grocer I used to have more sweets than I could eat, but now—I never get enough! . . . I don't hate you now as much as I did, Meemee. . . . Have one?

Mee. Oh, tank, tank, no! . . . Shabby humbleness never dare!

Yung. It won't hurt you, Meemee, it's a very little one.

Mee. Oh, so graciously to condescen'! Tank!

[*She grovels and advances on all fours. Having received it she takes opportunity, while* YUNGLANGTSI *is exploring the box for remains, to throw it away and wipe her hand.*

Yung. It's very hard, Meemee, when one's got a sorrow like mine, ever to forget it.

Mee. Ah! dat so true!

Yung. It spoils my appetite, Meemee; it upsets my digestion . . . sometimes it even prevents me from sleeping. . . . I haven't slept . . . I haven't slept since . . . You there, Meemee?

Mee. Yes.

Yung. Come and fan me!

Voice (*without, in the distance*). Lights, lights, lights, lights, lights. People! People! People! Light your lanterns all.

Chorus (*in distance*).

Ching-a-ring-a-ring-ting, feast of lanterns!
Time to chime the lute, the flute, the loud bassoon!
Shouting out, and all about the link-light man turns:
Sing awake a tune to make the moon come soon!

Yung. Meemee!

Mee. Ya-as . . . please? . . . Say? . . .

Yung. You still there?

Mee. Ya-as.

Yung. . . . Stop fanning me.

[*He sleeps.*

Voice (*without, going by with rattle of wand on wall*). Lights, lights, lights! People, people, people! Light your lanterns all!

[TIKIPU *enters from street.*

Tiki. Meemee! . . . Has everyone gone out?

Mee. Sh! not gone yet! . . .

[*Points.*

Tiki. But they *are* all going? Mrs. Back-of-the-house, too?

Mee. She say.

Tiki. Oh, look here, Meemee! When they've gone—you come and clean up for me and I'll—well I'll show you something I'm doing.

[*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. OLANGTSI.

Mrs. O. Oh, so you are back, are you? When is the chair coming?

[TIKIPU *looks out.*

Tiki. Condescension, they are bringing it now.

Voices (*without*). Lights, lights, lights. Come and see the sights. Chin, Chin, Chinaman! Did ever you see a finer man? A major or a minor man. Lights, lights, lights.

Mrs. O. Olangtsi, are you ready?

Olang. Yes, my dear, I'm ready. Where is *my* lantern, Meemee?

Mrs. O. Is Yunglangtsi ready?

Mee. Yes, high-mighty, he leddy an' waitin' mos' patient.

[STUDENTS *heard without.*

Mrs. O. Tell them to come right in.

[TIKIPU *opens door wide; they enter with chair and bearers.* "*Lights, lights, lights,*" *etc.*

Olang. (*to* YUNGLANGTSI). Now, you fat feather bed, wake up!

[*Shakes him.*

Mrs. O. Let him alone! He can go just as well asleep if he likes! There, put him in! Then you can start; we'll follow presently.

Students. Oh!

[*They lift the chair with a great effort.*

Yung. Oh, mother, I've just had such a dream —such a dream! I dreamt I was a grocer again. . . . I dreamt that I . . .

[*Exeunt* STUDENTS, *bearing* YUNGLANGTSI. "*Lights, lights, lights,*" *etc.*

Olang. Ah, the low lout! Grocer indeed! How shall I ever make an artist of a thing like that?

Mrs. O. You won't, so don't worry yourself! That's Heaven's affair, not yours. As he's got to wait, he may as well do it sleeping as waking. You can't hurry a comet by treading on its tail! so you'd better leave it alone. . . . Meemee, you go to bed at once. . . . Tikipu, take away those oil cans.

[*Exit* MEEMEE *into house,* TIKIPU *into pantry.*

(*To* OLANGTSI.) Now, then, we are going, you understand. I shall go out that way; you go this. By the time you come back I'll manage to be in the house somewhere. If you want me, call me;

only mind you don't come too soon, or we shan't catch him! . . .

[*Reënter* TIKIPU.

Now, then (*to* TIKIPU), as soon as you've cleaned up here you go to bed, too. Put out those lights —you only want one! Olangtsi, mind you lock the street door! I'll go out the other way and meet you! Be quick, put out those lights.

[*To* TIKIPU. *Exit.*

Olang. Yes, put them all out! Don't go burning my candles at both ends.

[*Exit fussily.*

Voices in distance.

China's burning, China's burning!
Look yonder, look yonder!
Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!
Oh, bring us some water!

[TIKIPU *leaves the lights and goes to get out his painting. Reënter* MEEMEE.

Mee. Oh, Tiki, she gone! She took de key, and when she go out she lock de door! . . . We all alone, you and me!

Tiki. All right! There, run along, put out those lights for me! Be quick, you've got plenty to do.

[*Music and loud drum beating is heard.*

Mee. Ah, say?

Tiki. Those are the bands going up to the temple. . . . That's where the procession starts. Hurry, Meemee! You know you were told to go to bed.

Mee. Me? . . . Me stay to help you, Tiki. . . . (*Looks over his shoulder.*) Dat de seclet?

Tiki. Yes.

Mee. Oh; Tiki, you stealin' de picture?

Tiki. Stealing it? No, silly! I'm only copying it, just one little bit of it at a time.

Mee. Oh, Tiki, it de velly exact same ting!

Tiki. Hah! that's all *you* can see! Ah, if only it were! (*He starts mixing colors.*) I've been thinking, Meemee, of what you said to-day about having to marry Yunglangtsi. . . .

Mee. Ye-es?

Tiki. Marrying you is going to make him a great artist?

Mee. Dat what de star say.

Tiki. Well, you know, Meemee, you mayn't like him—but it must be a fine thing to be the wife of a great artist.

Mee. (*doubtfully*). H'm.

Tiki. You'd be very proud of him.

Mee. H'm.

Tiki. You'd hear people say such fine things about him—about his pictures, I mean.

Mee. H'm.

Tiki. And then, you see, they'd say it all came from his marrying *you*.

Mee. Ugh! He never tell dem not'ing 'bout dat! . . . He keep dat to *him*self . . . fo' fear dat some wise man come an' steal me; an' den me teach him to paint better dan *he* can.

Tiki. Oh! so you think you could teach painting?

Mee. Oh, yes! dat quite easy ting—jus' to paint!

[*Makes an imaginary flourish of the brush.*

Tiki. Ah! that shows how little you know. Now I dare say you think that is nothing but a piece of rice paper or silk or linen with paint spread over it?

Mee. Oh, ye-es! And all de poo' man's wasted time! I know—go on!

Tiki. Yes! Wasted time! That is what every one,
Who's not an artist thinks, when it is done!
But really—truly—if they had but eyes!
Yonder lie glimpses of a paradise
That is all round us; but that they can't see!
We are all prisoners, under lock and key,
Bereft of light—until some painter soul
Comes with great love and labor, and cuts a hole
Through the thick wall, and shows all fresh and fair
A heaven of living beauty waiting there
It's call to earth! Waiting: and we—stand dumb!

Mee. What silly heaven dat is! Why wait? We want, we want—and it wait!

Tiki. If we called loud enough for it, it would come!
Look, Meemee, look! This picture is the gate
Of a new world! . . . Oh, if you could but see!
In there is Life, magic, any mystery!—
It moves . . . it breathes . . . it changes

[*Pause.*

There sometimes, Meemee—
Sometimes when I am here alone at night,
I have seen all that garden change its light—
Sunlight to moonlight; I can see the flowers
Close their bright eyes; and into those dim bowers
Lo, like a whispered word,

Comes sleep; and every bird,
That with uplifted throat now seems to make
Those treetops shake,
Stops with a will to let full silence flow.
All, all looks still . . . and yet I know . . .
Something with power to break
The spell stands there . . . awake!

Well, now I've told you and how much of it do you understand, I wonder! There! Off you run to bed like a good little girl. I'm going to be busy. Good night. . . . Why aren't you gone, Meemee?

Mee. Mrs. High-Mighty tell you to go to bed —you sit up still; why not Meemee sit up, too?

Tiki. Oh, well, I've got something to do.

Mee. Plaps you not de only person got something to do. . . . You not want me . . . plaps me want meself. . . . (*Music passes.* MEEMEE *moves to it.*) Oh, de music! . . . Say, s'all I sing to you?

Tiki (*indifferently*). Oh—yes—if you like.

Mee. H'm . . . yes. You like me to tell you all about myself.

Tiki. Yes . . . oh, yes . . . that ought to be . . . quite . . . amusing.

[*He speaks absent-mindedly.*

Mee. Music, stop all dat noise! . . . Dey stop. . . . Ah, now . . . ah, now . . .

[*She speaks to music that belongs to her song alone, till the outer music again breaks in.*

Meemee orphan from far off lan':
Meemee's fader was great big man!—

So big—so! He long ago
Die—leave me not know where to go!
Heigho! so—

[*Music breaks in.*

Give me chance, me laugh, me sing,
See now, ah?—Ting-a-ting—Ting-a-ting!

[*Speaks.*

Say! Isn't dat pletty—what?

Meemee wise; wise mo'n you!
Got two eyes—mos' good as new—
See dere, eh? Lef', right; say
What color in dem dey got to-day?
How you hope?—s'all dey ope, s'all dey wink?
You not care, eh? You no' tink?

[*Speaks.*

Say! Isn't dat pletty—what?

Got no mother—never had none—
Got no brother, an' don' want one,
No little sis'—nobody to kiss—
Nobody to miss me—nobody to miss.
Heigho!—so—
Nowhere else to go!
See—dat jus' de way dat I come here,
Seven year ago—a long seven year!
Oh, dear!

[*Speaks.*

Say! Isn't dat pletty—what?

Tiki. Oh, how can *I* tell, Meemee! I haven't got eyes in the back of my head. Can't you see I'm busy?

Mee. Dat what all de wicked people say. Dey say dey'm busy—dey mean dey *don' care*! . . . You don't care. . . . Don' tink Meemee care, neither. . . . Sure not! . . . (*Goes and looks maliciously over his shoulder.*) You got dat drawn —all *wrong*!

[*Turns away.*

Tiki. Where, Meemee? Tell me!

Mee. (*laughing to herself*). Don' know. She got no eyes in de back of *her* head!

Tiki. But show me, Meemee, show me!

Mee. Ugh! (*Relenting and turning to sweet flattery.*) Ah! *say*, isn't dat pletty—what?

Tiki. Pretty! Meemee, don't you ever dare to call anything that *I* paint pretty! It's only quite silly things that are pretty—colored toys and wax dolls and paper kites and fat babies, so long as they don't cry, and foolish little girls who sit and chatter, but know nothing whatever about Art! . . . Oh, they are as pretty as you like . . . but they are all littler than the littlest thing *I* ever mean to do . . . so there!

Mee. M'm? . . . say dat? . . . Den you know noting, noting! You no' never be big till you been little first—littler dan me, littler dan de littlest babby dat ever cly fo' its mammy to come! Yes! Foolish chattering little gels what don't know noting 'bout Art—dey's bigger inside dan you know! Dey's bigger pains—dey's bigger hearts—dey's bigger upside-down inside-out altogedder dan anyt'ing you know 'bout. It's too *busy* 'bout itself! . . . So's Meemee—too *busy*. . . . Me goin' now. . . . Goo' night!

[*Exit.*

Tiki. She's right! She's right! That chattering little idiot is right! . . . Yes, it's too busy! It's all too flat, too tight! Oh, Wiowani, if only I had you here at my hand to teach me what to do!

[*Sighs.*

[*Procession passes, with lights, music, song "China's burning, etc.," and the multitudinous babble of a festive crowd. The popping of fireworks is heard, sticks are rattled along the wall.* TIKIPU *paints on, absorbed in his art. The crowd and its noises trickle away.*

Tiki. Oh, I'm too good, Wiowani! I'm no good!
Just now I thought that no one understood
So well as I. . . . But this—it's all too flat!
Too tight, too stuffy!
How did you do that!
That isn't paint—that's—oh! how is it done—
It's sunlight—I mean moonlight, no—no—sun—
Wiowani, is it moonlight or sunlight? Oh!
How am I to paint it if I do not know?
Ah, how you beat me! How can I recall
The beauty and the mystery of it all!

[*He goes and examines the picture.*

Oh! is *that* it? Yes, yes, I see! How strange!
Is it the painting, or my eyes that change?
Or is it that Divinity dwells here,
And in my darkness makes a light shine clear?

O Wiowani, Wisdom born of old,
Soon shall I learn thy way!
Thy light shall guide me, and thy hand shall hold;

[OLANGTSI *slides open the door.*

And some day men shall point to me and say,

[*Enter* OLANGTSI.

"There goes the little painter, in whose brain
Great Wiowani brought to life again
The art of ancient days!"
So shall they speak in Wiowani's praise
While praising me!
Oh, Wiowani, say! When shall it be?

[OLANGTSI *creeps forward and peers over* TIKIPU'S *shoulder. At sight of the drawing he gives a start of astonishment and utters an angry cry of stupefied rage.*

Olang. Oh!

[TIKIPU *jerks up his hands, drops his brush, and turns to find himself discovered. He attempts to conceal his drawing by reversing it upon his knees.*

[*He takes* TIKIPU *by the scruff and shakes him.* TIKIPU *shows him the drawing.*

So, little thief, at last you have been caught!
What thief—what great thief in the night has taught
You to *steal*—like this? . . .

Tiki. Master, I have not stolen, that is not true!
Olang. Not stolen? Oh! so this belongs to you?
Whose is that paint, whose candles do you burn?
First you steal these; and then with these in turn
You come by stealth and rob me of my Art!
Tiki. How do I rob you, when I take no part
Of what is yours? Indeed, I have no skill!
This counts for nothing; but some day it will—
Perhaps—when I have learned!
Olang. You learn! How dare you say
That you will learn? How have you found the way
To learn at all? Tell me that! Tell me that!
Tiki. Oh, it is nothing to be angry at!
I only listened, Master, while you taught
Others the way; and while you spoke you brought
New wisdom to my brain, and have my hand
The craftsman's cunning—for you understand
The meanings of the mystery they spurn—
And as I listened, I could not choose but learn!
Olang. What right had you to listen? What right, I say,
To make your profit where others had to pay?
Yours is a hireling's place; you were brought here
To rub, scrub, and run errands! And you dare
Come prying into the privacies of Art,
The Art of Wiowani—which stands apart
Sacred and secret, its traditions known
And practiced by my family alone?
You play the spy! You come by night; you spoil
My paper, take my tools, and burn my oil—
Stealing my Book of Beauty leaf by leaf—
And yet you dare to say you are no thief!

Tiki. As a starving man reaches his hand for bread,
So in my darkness I reached out for these!
Master, the hunger was too strong—the dread
Of Beauty drove me! For her fierce decrees
Man must obey, albeit to his own doom!
Her law brings bondage; where her feet find room
Her hand holds sway; she tears that it may bleed
The heart which follows her, and every need
Of man's frail flesh she takes and turns to scorn!
Who worships her, by him is sackcloth worn,
And on his head she sets no crown of joy,
But ashes only—symbol to be borne,
If you betray her, how she will—destroy!

Olang. Tiki, you know that I have always been,
Been a kind master to you. . . .

Tiki. (*doubtfully*). Oh, ye-es!

Olang. I mean,
I have never beaten you, Tiki, not enough
To hurt; I have not starved you or been rough
To you. . . . Have I, Tiki? . . . No. . . . My mind was bent
Kindly toward you. . . . I had always meant
To help you. . . .

Tiki. Help me?

Olang. Why were you not content
To wait? . . .

Tiki. To help me? Oh, if that were true,
Master, there's nothing I'd not do
In bondage for your sake! Yes, you may take
All that I have; all I can ever earn,
Of fame or fortune, so you'll let me learn
To be a painter! And you need not give
Me anything—just the bare means to live;

Enough to keep
Body and soul together! I want no sleep,
No warmth, no comfort of any kind, no part
In anything except the joy of art—
Of art!

Olang. Listen to me! Why do you interrupt
While I am speaking? I was saying—yes, yes,
That I had always intended, more or less,
When you had served your time here and been paid,
To help you to some business or trade
Suited to your capacities and your class.
Now for this once I am willing to let pass
The gross deception of your conduct here—
And as your mind is evidently not clear
About the future, I am prepared, I say,
To give you now, without further delay,
The means of making—if you wish—a start
Upon your own account which, for my part,
I think will—suit you. . . . This, this, as you see,
Is the certificate of grocery
Which my own son, who, as you know, desires
To be a painter, now no more requires.
With this you can be a grocer—on condition
That you do not presume in that position
To practice, meddle, or take any part
Nefariously in processes of art
Which you don't understand—and never will. . . .
You will find there a space where you can fill
Your name in. . . . There! . . . I call that—do
not you?—

[*He hangs certificate round* TIKIPU'S *neck.*

A very handsome offer, Tikipu. . . .
What do you say?

Tiki. Master, dear Master, oh!
You do not mean what you are saying! No, no!
Ah, tell me! though my work means little yet,
Has it no promise . . . None? Do you forget
How you, too, learned—and did things—oh! not well—
But each time, as a child that learns to spell,
Your hand became more sure, until it caught
The kindling fire! And then you had no thought
Of fame or money, or what the world might say,
But only of Beauty and the joy that lay
There in your hands—the joy of giving birth
To form! . . . And then, had anyone on earth
Bade you stop painting—would you not have said—
"To win your wish first you must strike me dead!"

Olang. You chattering little devil, you driveling brat!
How dare you mock at me with your mouth like that!
Swear by your father's dust, never to lay
Finger on paint again, or lift a hand
To mock at things you do not understand.
Swear it, I say!

Tiki. Oh, if I did, that dust out of the grave
Should rise and choke me! No, were I your slave,
I'd keep my birthright! To possess that prize
You must cut off these hands, put out these eyes,
Drain me of blood, and draw me limb from limb!
For it is Wiowani, 'tis from him
That I get strength; 'tis Wiowani who
Now stands in judgment betwixt me and you!

Olang. Some Devil has made you say that! Some Devil, I say!
What? So you think yourself worth saving, eh?

Worth having, eh! Worth teaching? Do you dream
I'd let a thing like that, a tricked-out scheme,
A muddy smear, a smudge of chalk and cheese,
A daub, a patch, a paint scab, a disease,
A niggled lie, a forger's fraud—go hence
Out of my studio to breed pestilence?
No, I will not! 'Tis treason if I spare!
Let go, let go! That finishes it!—
So there!

[*He tears the drawing into fragments and throws them down.* TIKIPU *screams with anguish and falls face forward, clutching the torn pieces.*

Get up, you blubbering booby! don't lie there
Biting the boards up! Now you've got to swear!
Give me your oath! What? So you're stubborn still?
Wait, we'll soon make you!—If I can't *she* will!

[*Exit into house.*

[*For a time* TIKIPU *lies sobbing. Presently he half rises, and gathers together the torn fragments of his drawing; he falls down again with a cry of despair.*

Tiki. He had no pity, no pity on me at all!
Wiowani! Oh, it is no use to call!
Nobody cares! Nobody hears my cry!
Oh, I have failed! Wiowani, let me die!
Oh, let me die!

[*In the picture the lantern begins to glow; under its rays the grave and benig-*

nant form of WIOWANI *is discovered seated.* TIKIPU *raises his head, for in the music he hears the call of his soul. He catches sight of* WIOWANI, *and starts to his knees with an exclamation of wonder.* WIOWANI *lifts his hand in beckoning.* TIKIPU *rises and advances slowly in trembling ecstasy.* WIOWANI *reaches forward and takes* TIKIPU *by the hand. With a long-drawn sigh of relief and rest* TIKIPU *is drawn into the picture. The lantern fades.* WIOWANI *and* TIKIPU *disappear.*

[*Outside is heard the chorus of approaching* STUDENTS.

Mew-cats, mew-cats, all fit and fat!
Mew-cats, mew-cats, what have you been at?
We've been out, round about quite long enough,
Catch your catch and home again! Phit! Phat! Fuff!

[*Enter* MEEMEE, *running.*

Mee. Tiki! Tiki—dey come back! He in dere talking to Mrs. Back-of-de-house! Go hidee—quick! . . . Tiki, where is you gone to?

[*She runs about and looks. Outside the chorus of returning* STUDENTS *is heard again. They are evidently drunk.*

Mew-cash, mew-cash, all fit and fat,
Mew-cash, mew-cash, wha'sh you been at?
We've been out, roun' 'bout, qui shlong 'nough,
Cash, cash, an' cash again, fiff! fuff! fuff!

Yung. (*without*). I want to go home to bed!

Teep. (*without*). If you want to go to bed, we must tosh you and turn you! Up with him! Whup!

Yung. (*without*). Put me down! Put me down, I tell you!

[*Laughter and general smash.*

Mee. Tiki?

[*Enter* YUNGLANGTSI; *he trails in, hardly able to speak for sleepiness.*

Yung. I want to go to bed, Meemee . . . where's mother?

Mee. (*coming on fallen easel and torn paper*). Ah, say! Who done dat? Who done dat wicked ting?

Yung. They did, Meemee! When I said "put me down," those devils they tossed me. But they all fell down, Meemee, and then I was on the top.

Mee. Tiki!

[*Enter* TEEPEE, *the others following.*

Teep. Hon'ble Yunglang-shy wants you to put him to bed. Meemee, I wantsh, I wantsh to be put to bed too, Meemee! Not de *shame* bed—don't you go making a mishtake. No—I wouldn't——

Naut. What are you sitting up for, Meemee?

Lilong. What are you crying for?

Hiti. She's crying because she's finished all those sweets we gave her. . . . But you mustn't have any more, Meemee, they'd be bad for you!

[*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. OLANGTSI.

Mrs. O. Make him? Of course I'll make him! Where have you put him to?

Mee. Put him too? Oh!

[*She becomes full of terror and apprehension.*

Yung. Mother, I want to go to bed.

Mrs. O. Where's Tikipu?

Yung. Mother, when I said put me down, those devils they tossed me!

Mrs. O. Who has seen Tikipu?

Hank. Sheen Tikipu? Who wantsh to shee Tikipu? Mother of Mountains, don't ashk such 'diculous questions!

Olang. But you *must* have seen him; he was here a moment ago!

Lilong. Don't shay he wasn't here momen-ago. If he *wash* here momen-ago—that's why he isn't here *now*—momen-ago'sh over.

Mrs. O. Has he gone out? Did you meet him in the street?

Teep. Meet him in the street! Why should we meet him in the street? He didn't ashk us to meet him in the street! Why should we meet him in the shtreet if he didn't ask us?

Mrs. Olang. Well, don't all stand gaping there! Go out and look for him!

Olang. He's not gone out. There are his shoes.

Mee. Oh-h-h! Tiki, what have dey done to you? Where have dey put you to, Tiki?

[*She picks up shoes, looks inside them, and fondles them.*

Mrs. O. Go and look in the house, one of you!

[*Exit* STUDENT.

Olang. Perhaps he's hiding in the roof. Go up and see!

Mrs. O. Go and look in the cellar!

Hiti. Yesh ho! Don't shtand talking—go! Go to the top of the house, go to the bottom of the house, go to Mrs. Back-of-the-house, and go to the devil! (*Mrs. O. cuffs him.*) Shan't help you to look for him any more now.

[*Exit with stately deliberation.*

Student (*from house*). He's not in the house! Mrs. Tip-top-shtory-teller has made a mistake.

Olang. Ah! where is it? Where has he put it to? Have you seen——

Student (*from roof*). He's not up here!

Student (*from cellar trap*). He's not down here —he's not— I'm sure he's not down——

[*Slips through trap, catches second* STUDENT *by the ankles and draws him after.*

Olang. Have you seen— (*Second* STUDENT *catches third* STUDENT *by hands and pulls him down headforemost.*) Have you seen——?

Mee. Oh, Tiki! Is you not anywhere? What have become of you, Tiki?

Student (*clinging to doorpost and waving hand aimlessly*). He's not out here!

Olang. The thief! The thief! He has run off with it!

Mrs. O. With what?

Olang. I gave it him to—to keep safe—I remember now—before I went out!

Mrs. O. Gave him what?

Olang. Why, the certificate, of course! What else? Your son's certificate of grocery! Ah, fool that I was! Fool!

Yung. My—my certificate?

Olang. Yes—he has taken it!

Yung. Boohoo! My beautiful—my beautiful certificate. You let him take it because you didn't want me to be a grocer! I hate you, father! Boohoo! Mother, take me to bed!

Student (*in doorway*). I know where he ish—he'sh behind that picture.

Olang. Ah, yes, behind the picture! Bring him out! Bring him out!

Students. No—he's not there! Nothing's there! 'Shtificate's not there, either!

Yung. Boohoo!

Mrs. O. There, there, don't fret. We'll get you another, just like it. There, don't cry!

[*Exit* Mrs. Olangtsi *and* Yunglangtsi *into house.*

[Students *link arms and cross the stage staggering.*

Students. My—my—my beautiful 'shtificate. . . . I hate you, father! Boohoo! Good night! . . .

[*They push* Student *from doorpost and go out.*

Olang. Oh, fool! Fool! Fool! Why, why did I . . . not . . . spare? (Meemee *holds up torn fragments of picture to* Olangtsi. *He strikes them down with a cry of rage.*) No! I will not! That finishes it. So there!

[*Exit.*

[*The truth dawns on* MEEMEE. *She utters a cry.*

Mee. Oh! dat kill Tiki! Dat kill—dat make him hate evellybody! Hate me now, always, always! He never speak to me! He never look at me again. He never come back—now. He gone! He gone! . . . Oh, Tiki, dey broken yo' heart all to pieces! Meemee know dat! Meemee understand!

[*She gathers torn pieces to her breast, kissing them.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *The studio before dawn.* MEEMEE *lies asleep on a mat in front of the picture. Outside a shuffling step is heard, and a sheeplike coughing. A dull lantern light passes along the street wall. Knocking.*

Mee. Who dat? (*She scuffles up and goes to the door.*) Josi Mosi, dat you?

[*Opens door.*

Josi. Yesh, dat'sh me. (*He enters.*) Nobody up yet?

[*He sets down the lantern.*

Mee. No . . . dey all asleep . . . so airly! Say! you blought dat lill' ting I tol' you?

Josi. Yesh, I've got it!

Mee. Sha!

Josi. What you want it for . . . eh?

Mee. Ugh! . . . meself of course! . . . Me sleep in here. . . . Al de big livelong rats come in de night and wake me! . . . Dey run on my toes . . . dey sit on my face. . . . . Not nice ting dat, eh?

Josi. Have you got de money?

Mee. Yah! . . . (*Fumbles in sleeve.*) Dere now! (*Gives him the money.*) No say dat all right?

Josi (*counting it*). Dat'sh all right.

[*He gives her a small vial.*

Mee. Oh! . . . dat all! Dat not e-nough! Dere's plenty twenty hundred rats in here. . . . Take a lot of killing, dey will!

Josi. Dat 'ud kill five hundred, dat would!

Mee. Kill me, too?

Josi. Kill de whole lot of you.

Mee. (*satisfied*). Ah!

Josi. So dey put *you* to shleep in here now, eh? Dat boy Tikipu never been sheen again, I shuppose?

Mee. (*startled*). What for you ask me dat now? . . . No . . . he not come.

Josi. M'm . . . reashon I ashk wash becosh dish is de very day he went—three yearsh ago. . . . Feasht of Lanternsh it wash. I've a reashon for remembering de date.

Mee. So?

Josi. It wash to-day. . . . What'sh dat? . . . Who's dat dere?

[*Enter* OLANGTSI *in sleeping attire.*

Mee. Ssh! It Mr. Olangtsi . . . he velly often come like dat . . . to de picture. . . . He not know anyting about it when he wake up! Ssh!

Olang. Ugh! Ugh! . . . Yes, yes . . . where was I? . . . I don't want you, my dear! . . . Go away! . . . You . . . you wouldn't understand! . . . Gen . . . gentle . . . gentlemen pupils . . . your immediate and polite attention! . . . On this very painful occasion when I address you for the last time . . . and this great picture of Wiowani's

which here stands before you . . . for the last time. . . . I ask you, I ask you, for the last time . . . your kind attention, gentlemen! . . . No, no. . . . I am not forgetting myself my dear, at all! . . . I am remembering what I once was . . . before you . . . before you came and robbed me! . . . Yes, you did—you robbed me! . . . like a thief in the night; first you robbed me of my sleep, then of my liberty, then of my conscience . . . and then, then of my art! Tikipu found out that for me! . . . And now everything is gone!

Josi. What'sh all dish mean?

Mee. He want Tikipu to come back, me tink. . . . He velly unhappy!

Olang. What thief, what great thief in the night taught you to steal . . . like that? . . . Oh, thief, thief, little thief! give it to me, give it to me, I say. There! There! . . . that finishes it! . . . that's done, Tikipu, that's done!

Mee. (*with enlightenment and pity*). Oh!

Olang. Don't cry, Tikipu . . . it's no use your crying like that! . . . Ah, that's good, that's good . . . but you mustn't paint like that any more. . . . It's not . . . it's not possible. She won't let you . . . it doesn't pay. . . . And if it doesn't pay, it's no good!

Josi. No, he'sh right dere; if it doesn't pay, it'sh no good! You know, little Mish Meemee, you going to have a new master to-day?

Mee. How you know dat? How you know dat?

Josi. Cosh I *do* know . . . it's de right day for it. . . . He knowsh dat, too.

[*Nods to* Olangtsi.

Mee. Den you know velly foolish ting, Mr. Josi Mosi, if you tink dat! Me *not* have *no* new master! So dere! . . . Dis kill so many rat; it will kill *me,* too!

Josi. Meemee, you give me dat back!

Mee. Noh!

Josi. Give it me back, I shay.

[*He tries to take bottle.*

Mee. Noh!

Josi. If you don't give it me I—I——

Mee. Don't you *touch* me! Don' you dare to come *near* me!

Voice (*without*). Yah-yah-yah-yah-yah-yah-eh?

[*A quick step goes by and a wand taps along the wall.*

Mee. Ah!

Josi. What'sh dat!

Mee. De watchman . . . "evellybody wake up!" he say. . . . You go!

Josi. You give me dat firsht!

[*Pursues her.*

Mrs. O. (*within*). Meemee, Meemee! You awake!

Mee. H'm, ya-ah! . . . Oh, ye-es! Almost quite awake now! . . . You go! . . . You gott'n yo' money—you go!

Mrs. O. (*within*). Get up, then; come quick, I want you!

Olang. Eh! Eh? Yes, my dear, I'm coming! I'm coming!

Josi. Cosi! I must fetch Cosi!

Mee. Yah!

[*Exit* Josi Mosi *in haste.*

Olang. Yes, yes, I was meaning to come. It was—it was only for the last time!

[*Exit* Olangtsi.

[*Enter* Mrs. Olangtsi *with light and bridal costume.*

Mrs. O. What are you doing—so slow when I call?

Mee. Only jus' to open de door!

Mrs. O. Don't want it open! Shut it! . . . Who's been in here?

[*Looks round suspiciously.*

Mee. It was a big rat dat would' go out! . . . Me told him *you* comin'; den he run on his hin' legs jus' like a man!

[*Starts to pull up blinds.*

Mrs. O. Here! Begin to get yourself dressed, or you'll be late! . . . There are your things. . . . (*She lays bridal costume on chair.*) Now attend to me and learn how a Chinese bride should behave.

Mee. Be-have?

Mrs. O. In a quarter of an hour—are you attending?—the bridesmen and the bearers will be here with the palanquin. As soon as you hear them outside you are to run in there and lock the door.

Mee. Dat door?

Mrs. O. Yes, that door; there isn't any other that I know of. . . . Don't lock it so much that

they can't force it without breaking it! . . . I don't want to be paying for repairs afterwards, you aren't worth it!

Mee. Leave it open, den?

Mrs. O. Open? Fine sense of modesty *you've* got! . . . Please to recollect that you are a Chinese bride; you do as I tell you! Pull up that blind! Then, when they fetch you out, you must struggle —d'you hear? Kick, bite, scratch. . . . Only mind you don't tear the dress! Do it decently; give one of them a scratch on his face where it can be seen, that'll be enough. If you show too much fight it looks like having too high an opinion of yourself. . . . When they've put you into the palanquin and locked you in—then you can do as you like.

Mee. So?

Mrs. O. Remember—the bride's procession is to start at sunrise; mind you are ready!

Mee. Hon'ble Mistless, at sunrise? Dat velly airly—dat not too soon, eh?

Mrs. O. Not if I say it's the time you are to be ready by. . . . When you want your bride-crown pinned on, come to me.

Mee. My bride crown? Oh, yes! . . . Say! . . . When dey put me in my lill' chair—palanquin —will all de blin's be down? No one to see me?

Mrs. O. Of course not. Who wants to see you? Here, go on and get dressed! You are wasting time.

[*Exit* Mrs. Olangtsi.

Mee. Yes—me wasting time! (*Pulling up blind.*) Silly dat! . . . Nobody want to see me? . . . No . . . nobody! Oh, run, Meemee, dere's

de worl' wakin'! (*She opens door and peeps out.*) Oh, gleat, big worl', wake up! . . . Meemee say good-by to you! . . . Oh, de lazy sun, all down dere, you not come up yet! . . . Meemee say good-by to you! . . . And nex' time dat he come, you tell Tiki, you tell Tiki—Meemee gone jus' 'cause she couldn't wait fo' him . . . any mo'! . . . Dat's all. . . . You all been velly, velly nice to me! . . . Good-by! . . .

[*She shuts the door and stands half trembling, looking at vial, facing the thought of death. Crossing the stage she comes on the bridal array left by* Mrs. Olangtsi.

Oh, pletty, eh? Oh! Say! isn't dat nice? What? . . . Quick, quick, Meemee! (*She begins to robe herself.*) Yes, quick! Yes, quick! Yes, quick! (*Puts on shoes.*) Lef', right, get dem all on! Dere! dat all right, eh? . . . (*Opens toilet box and gets out mirror and paints.*) Now, Meemee, you got to make yo'self mos' beautiful—because to-day, you say—you *say* you goin' to be mallied to Tiki. And dat make you so glad, dat make you so happy, dat you laugh, an' laugh, an' laugh till all de tears come into yo' eyes! You velly silly little gel, you! . . . (*She dries her eyes and takes up mirror.*) Look at yo'self! Hee-hee! (*She turns the glass about and knocks on the back of it.*) Meemee? Meemee? You round dere? You *round* dere? . . . Right *in* dere? (*Turns it.*) 'Course I is! She in dere all de time! Catch her not? . . . No . . . no . . . she dere, I say she dere! . . . He say

once—he say "silly lill' gel know nothing 'bout art!" Ah, ha! Himself he know not'ing, not'ing —*at* all! . . . Himself! . . . Tiki, dat went away and never come back!

[*She produces from secret hiding the shoes which* TIKIPU *left behind.*

Meemee, Meemee know not where
He gone . . . he gone!
He not here! He not dere!

[*She looks into her powder boxes and at the shoes.*

No use looking anywhere!
He gone!
Every day, sin' dey say
He gone an' not come back—
Meemee wait—still he stay.
Meemee hope, Meemee pray.
All Meemee's hair gone gray!
Dat's a fac'!

(*Looks at herself in glass and continues talking.*) Only jus' now it don't show—dat's all why she can't see it. (*She puts out light. Within the house are heard the voices of* MR. *and* MRS. OLANGTSI *raised in altercations and* YUNGLANGTSI *crying, "I don't want to get up!" As* MEEMEE *listens her resolution is formed.*) Don' you waste time, Meemee!—don' you waste time! Soon dey come—to take you away from yo'self. You say not'ing to dat. . . . You only be *here* . . . let dem *find* you here, eh? . . . let dem see you not belong to dem at all . . . you belong . . . *all* . . . *to* . . . *yo'self* . . . because Tiki have fo'gotten you! (*She*

takes the vial of poison from her breast.) Goo'-by, Meemee! . . . Goo'by . . . goo' . . .

[*While she has been speaking the picture glows slowly into life. Under the rays of the lantern* WIOWANI *is discovered seated, benignant of aspect. He plucks three times upon the strings of his guitar. At the third sound* MEEMEE'S *attention is arrested; she shuffles the poison out of sight and turns her head.*

Mee. (*with childlike curiosity*). H'm? . . . How you come in dere?

Wio. Years ago, when youth was spent,
The door was open, so in I went,

Mee. Catch yo' foot and trip, eh? . . . Say? is it all velly nice in dere?

Wio. A matter of taste; the view is free.
You can look for yourself and see.

Mee. (*doubtfully*). H'm! . . . Is dere anyone pletty in dere?

Wio. Pretty's a word that knows no rule.
Here we have only the Beautiful.

Mee. H'm! . . . H'm! . . . not *pletty*?

[WIOWANI *shakes his head.*

Mee. (*very satisfied*). Say? . . . *Me* pletty, you no' tink?

Wio. My eyes have grown too old to see.
You're too far off . . . come nearer to me!

Mee. (*advancing by degrees*). Hee-hee! . . . Hee-hee! . . . Tsz!

Wio. Nearer . . . nearer. . . . Yes, that will do.
Sit down! . . . I've been waiting to talk to you.

Mee. Ya-as . . . of course.

[*She squats on daïs.*

Wio. Three years I've waited, while time has tarried.
Meemee, when are you going to get married?

Mee. (*stiffly*). Not goin' to get mallied.

Wio. Oh, yes, you are! Tell the truth, Meemee! Come now!—when is the day to be?

Mee. (*reluctantly*). Well . . . me'd bin hopin' dey forget. . . . Dey not! . . . Las' night de Mistless say, "Meemee!" (*like dat!*) "you gettin' yo'-self leddy to mally to-mollow—first ting?" . . . (*Her voice begins to quaver.*) Me gettin' meself leddy *now*. . . . Plesently she come; plesently she say, "You wife, you not lill' gel any mo!"

Wio. And then?

Mee. And den! Ah, den me got to die!

Wio. Die? When?

Mee. Me got lill' bottle of "come-wid-me" in here! Hee-hee, hee-hee! . . . Me take it—so; me say to my beautiful new husban', "Yo' health!—yo' velly good health!" . . . den me drink . . . den me say, "How nice!" Den me die! . . . Den he lef' widower. . . . Oh, poo' man!

Wio. Oh, he'll get over it, bit by bit!
But what will Tikipu say to it?

Mee. Tikipu? Why say Tikipu? Who say? Who say?

Wio. Oh, yes! It's all very well for you;
But what will it mean for Tikipu?

Mee. Not'ing. . . . He fo'gotten me.
Wio. Oh, ho?
Mee. He don' care fo' me.
Wio. Oh, ho?
Mee. He don' want me!
Wio. He didn't you mean, when he went away? When he returns—perhaps he may!
Mee. Ah, say? Ah, say? Oh, gleat, big, beautiful wise man, you tink dat?
Wio. And if he does—then, what about you? How can you hope to help Tikipu?
Mee. Ugh! Dat velly easy ting, if he really want me. . . . Me say here to myself sometimes: "Now, tink, Meemee, tink Tiki come all back again! Tink dat you am his wife! . . . Den he sit like dis, and he paint, an' you—just sit-an'-wait! . . . plesently he paint—*all* wrong—got to be closs with somebody—of course! Den he closs wid you, an' you—jus' sit-an'-wait! . . . Den he paint *'bominable* . . . got to beat somebody . . . beat you, eh? . . . Den de picture come—*all* right! . . . Say, isn't dat de way? What? . . . De man dat mally *me*—gleat artis', see?
Wio. Yes, if he understands, may be. Where did you learn all that, Meemee?
Mee. It all inside of me! . . . Dat kind of ting come all of itself—me tink!
Wio. Ah! That's good! Well, some day *you* Will have to teach that to Tikipu.
When he returns perhaps you'll find
Tikipu with an absent mind.
Wake him tenderly, take him in hand,
Teach him! Then he will understand. . . .
There, run along! Yes, go your way,

Deck yourself out in bridal array,
Stick gold bodkins into your head,
Dab your cheeks with patches of red,
Paint your lips like petals of rose,
Rub your powder-puff over your nose,
Play the tricks that you know by heart,
Color your eyes, and call it "Art."
And when you stand, after all is done,
Crowned like a bride in the sight of the sun,
Then in your time—call Tikipu!
And he, if he hears, will come to you!

[WIOWANI *vanishes into picture.*

Mee. (*quietly surprised*). Say! . . . Funny picture dat! Meemee, you been asleep?

Mrs. O. (*within*). Now, Meemee! Meemee! Meemee!

Mee. Oh, ya-as!

[*She skurries round, collecting her toilet materials, etc., and runs into house. Far away bridal music is heard. Within the picture goes a murmur of soft music.* WIOWANI *reappears, leading* TIKIPU *by the hand.* TIKIPU *steps out of the picture as one walking in his sleep.*

Wio. So you have come back to the world again!
There's dawn beginning white against the pane.
What does life look like? Does the dream seem true
Now you have wakened from it, Tikipu?
What? Soon from your brain

All this dead breath shall melt, as from the pane
Melts the white frost! Now if my labor stands,
Yonder you hold it!—Go and wash your hands!—
There's too much paint upon them, and the stain
Of midnight oils. Catch hold on life again,
Ere it be flown! You know the tale that's told
How to my door an Emperor came of old
And begged, but would not enter. . . . Fortune's clown,
Burdened with power, he durst not lay it down!
But there's another tale, that's yet to tell,
Of one that came, and—loving peace too well—
Would not go out!—indolent and unmoved,
Gifted with powers he feared to have them proved!
Chosen of gods, the gods he chose to cheat
And here sat lapped in rest with folded feet,
A tranquil traitor, careless of his kind.
Go—get you gone! And leave your dreams behind.
Nay! What have you done yet to earn the rest
And peace wherein I dwell? Have your hands blest
Dull clay or caused the moldering dead to wake?
Have you so starved and striven and toiled to make
Your vision true; and have you failed and tried,
And failed and found—only to be denied
And stand at last a mark for all man's scorn?
And have you learned that faith is only born
Out of thick darkness—hope out of despair—
Love out of hate—and that the world proves fair
Only through this—the blindness of men's eyes,
Whereto all Beauty goes for sacrifice?
Ah, though I speak with tongues, he understands
Nothing at all! Go, go and wash your hands

In life, and live anew! . . .
The world awaits you! Good-by, Tikipu!

[TIKIPU *has turned slowly away, gazing at his hands in a daze of grief and humility.* WIOWANI *vanishes into the picture.*

[*Reënter* MEEMEE, *wearing her bridal crown.* TIKIPU *continues to move away.*

Mee. Tiki! . . . Tikipu!

Tiki. Why, Meemee . . . is that you? What have you come for? . . . It's . . . it's very early, isn't it? . . . Is anyone up? Meemee . . . what's the matter? . . . You are changed. . . . What has happened since yesterday?

Mee. Since yes'day?

Tiki. It was . . . it was yesterday, wasn't it? Meemee . . . how long have I been away?

Mee. For tree year, Tiki . . . tree whole year.

Tiki. (*dumfounded*). Three y——!

Mee. You 'shamed of yo'self, Tiki, eh? . . . What for you come back now? H'm? . . . Los' yo' way, I suppose!

Tiki. Yes, Meemee . . . it's strange! . . . I've . . . I've lost my way! . . . Three years! . . . And you are not married yet, Meemee?

Mee. What dat matter to you, Mr. Tiki? . . . No . . . not yet. . . . P'laps dat why you come . . . to see me . . . *mallied*! . . . Well, den . . . you jest in time!

Tiki. (*realizing for the first time* MEEMEE*'s bridal array*). Meemee . . . there's something . . . I . . . don't understand.

Mee. Ah, ha! . . . So you found dat out!

Tiki. It's gone! . . . something's gone . . . something . . . without which . . . I . . . can't live! Gone!

Mee. Ah! I know what all de matter! . . . I know! Dere! . . . (*She brings out* TIKIPU'S *shoes from hiding place.*) You lef' yo' gleat big shoes behin'. . . . I keep dem quite safe . . . all de time!

[*She kneels, hits first one foot, then the other, and puts them on his feet. He still stands dazed.*

Tiki. Gone! . . . Oh! where shall I find help . . . *now*?

Mee. Won' Meemee do? Won' Meemee do? (*He stands disregarding her.*) . . . You not want me? . . . You not want me, Tiki? . . . Goo'-by. I'm going to be mallied to-day . . . yes, to somebody . . . my star say to-day, only to-day! . . . ol' maid if I don't mally to-day. . . . Goo'-by! Ah! Ah!

[*She breaks into sudden tremblings and sobbings.*

[TIKIPU *turns and looks at her earnestly; round her as she stands the light gradually grows bright. . . . She stretches her hands pleadingly toward him for the last time.*

Tiki. Meemee! Meemee! What have you done to yourself? . . . Don't look at me like that! Don't look at me like that! . . . Your eyes are beautiful, Meemee! Shut them or I shall go blind!

Mee. Ah! It come! It come! Say, Tiki, you is wantin' . . . somebody . . . to help you?

Tiki. My whole life is a want, Meemee! If you come with me you will lose everything!

Mee. I got not'ing to lose, Tiki.

Tiki. You will be hungry!

Mee. I've been hungly for tree years, Tiki.

Tiki. Homeless—perhaps!

Mee. I never had a home, Tiki.

Tiki. Friendless!

Mee. Ah, ha!

Tiki. Poor! Poorer than the poorest you have known. . . . Look under this . . . this robe. . . . (*Bewildered to find that he is wearing a strange garment.*) I have only my old rags. . . . And you . . .

Mee. (*showing herself*). I jus' de same!

Tiki. Often I shall neglect you, Meemee; sometimes I may even forget you! . . . for there is something I . . . love . . . more than you! . . . If you come with me, it is to help me to find eyes more wonderful than your own, and a mistress whose bond slave you also shall be!

Mee. She velly beautiful, Tiki?

Tiki. I have never seen her, Meemee. But in your eyes I find the reflection of her face!

Mee. Den when I shut dem, you no see her—at all?

Tiki. Open them, Meemee! Open your eyes! Oh . . . Meemee!

[*He surrenders himself utterly to her spell.*

Mee. Tiki . . . is you awake?

Tiki. Yes! Awake at last!

Mee. You been asleep for tree years, eh? What you been dreaming of, Tiki?

Tiki. I was dreaming of you—*all the time*!

Mee. Dat true? Ah! What Meemee made for! De man dat mally me . . . gleat . . . !

[*As she clings to him, the song of the bridal procession is heard approaching. They start and listen.*

Chorus (*without*).

Is the lily on the lake?
Is the bride wide awake?
Here's a party come to take her home!
There's a cozy bed to make,
There's a rosy cake to bake,
And there's honey, too, to take from the comb.

Mee. Now dey comin' fo' me!

Tiki. They shan't have you, Meemee! Quick, let us go!

[*Knocking is heard without.*

Mee. No, no . . . it too late now! . . . Go, hidee, Tiki, go hidee!

Tiki. In here!

[*They run into pantry.*

[*Enter* STUDENTS *and* APPRENTICES, *followed by bearers with hooded palanquin, which is set down propped on stools in the center of the stage.*

Oh, who will go inside?
Oh, who will bring the bride,
For the knot to be tied as it ought?
Give a rat-tat-tat-tat-tat!
If she doesn't come for that,

Then the naughty little cat must be caught.
Phit, phat, miaow! Phit, phat, miaow!
Then the naughty little cat must be caught!

New. Well, and which of all the blushing doors is the right one?

Lilong. That's the one!

Hiti. Teepee, you and I are the adopted relatives; we've got to defend it.

[*Takes up attitude of defense before door.*

Hiti. Scarecrows avaunt!
I say you shan't
Intrude! It's rude
And most improper!

Teep. Robbers beware!
This, damsel fair
Who steals—by heels
He comes a cropper.

[*Plants his foot in* LILONG'S *stomach and floors him.*

Lilong (*from floor*). Oh, put aside
Your family pride!
Our suit denied
Deride no more!

Hank. Let her decide
With us to ride!

All. Come, bride, bride, bride!
Undo the door! . . .
Bride! come along, bride! Door, door, door!

Naut. Why, she hasn't locked it!

New. Laws of Confucius! What a fuss all about nothing!

[*They advance to the door.*

Lilong. Take care! She'll scratch you! She's waiting behind the door!

Hank. Fetch her out! Nautee, fetch her out!

[*He pushes* NAUTEE *into the inner chamber.*

Hiti. Have his blood, Meemee! Have his blood!

Naut. Why, she isn't here at all!

Hiti. Her feet have beat a modest retreat!

Teep. You'd better have proof she's not in the roof!

[*They all run in.*

STUDENTS (*within*). In the roof? Fetch her out!

Oh, there isn't a doubt
She is somewhere about!

[*Quick ascent of ladder is heard.*

We are looking for proof
That's she's not in the roof
Sing the catch of the cat and the mouse!
If she isn't up there,
Why, then, I declare
She is hiding herself in the house.

[*Meanwhile* TIKIPU *and* MEEMEE *have been trying to steal to the street door; as each attempt fails they retreat precipitately. Immediately on exit of* HITI *and* TEEPEE, MEEMEE *runs across to the door, reverses the key, and locks it from the outside.*

Mee. Now, Tiki, quick, quick, quick!

She throws off bride dress onto floor.

Tiki. They are coming back, Meemee!

Mee. No—not yet! . . . Silly man—make me do it all! How you able to run and hide in all dis? (*She pulls off his robe, uncovering the certificate which hangs down his back.*) Oh! Tiki, dat what you stole? (TIKIPU *takes it and stares astonished; presently his wonder changes to laughter.*) Tiki, don' laugh like dat! You wastin' time!

Tiki. Oh, now I know what I have done!
I'm a thief, Meemee! I must run!
Poor Yunglangtsi! There, let it stay!
I'm a much bigger thief to-day;
I'm stealing *you*!

[*Knocking at inner door.* TIKIPU *throws open the street door; the warm hues of dawn stream in.*

Tiki. Dawn, Meemee, dawn! Look how the hands of light
Reach up and lift the covering cowl of night
From the blush-blinded eyes of Heaven! And she,
Heart-woken and warm-footed o'er the sea,
Her face a fountain of desires long stored,
Goes kindling to the arms of her great lord!
And lo! he comes rejoicing, and flings gold,
Till all the earth is with his joy enrolled;
And every life a mote in his glad beams
Melts forth to meet him, and where'er light streams
Dance till it drowns! Ah, look! The sun, the sun!

[*Knocking.*

Shall we go, Meemee?

Mee. Yes! I go! I run!

[*They run off, holding hands and laughing.*

Voice (*within*). Look here, Newlyn, I say! She's locked us in. Go round the other way.

[*By the stairs* STUDENTS *and* BEARERS *come running just as the door falls, broken from its hinges.*

Students. Oh, boobies sublime!
She was here all the time!
She was hiding in here;
And it didn't occur
To anyone's mind
That we'd left her behind!

Teep. Oh, muddleheads, fuddleheads, go and kow-tow,
To the cunning of woman!

Students. She isn't here now!

Naut. Oh, but I say!

Lilong. D'you think she's run?

New. If she has—we're *done*!

All. We shall get no pay!

[*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. OLANGTSI.

Mrs. O. What's all this about? Who's done that?

[*Seeing broken door.*

Lilong. That was Meemee; she fought like a cat!

New. With the kick of her heels she smashed the door.

Teep. She threw the palanquin down on the floor.

Hiti. She rent to rags her bridal array!

Hank. She took off her crown and she threw it away!

Lilong. Her hair stood up like a cheveux-de-frise!

Naut. She knocked us head over heels with ease!

New. She pulled our pigtails, tore our clothes!

Pee. Her mouth was full of horrible oaths!

Teep. She deafened our ears with dreadful cries!

Hank. She bit off our buttons and scratched our eyes!

Hiti. She trod on our toes; she wrenched our thumbs!

Naut. She beat our bodies about like drums.

Teep, Hank, Hiti, Lilong, Pee-ah (*all together*).
And then, 'tis a story that needs no heightening,
And then, having given us such a frightening,
And then, with her witchlike eyes all whitening,
And then, in a flash with raiment brightening,
And then, on our heart with terror tightening,

All. She vanished away like a flash of lightning!

Mrs. O. Pah! where is she?

[*They grovel as* Mrs. Olangtsi *advances on them with threatening gesture.*

Students. She. . . . Oh, she locked us in! It wasn't fair! Now was it? It wasn't what we'd expected. We don't know where she is! We haven't seen her!

[*Enter running* Josi *and* Cosi Mosi.

Josi. Where'sh Meemee?

Mrs. O. That's what *I* want to know.

[HITI-TITI *picks up poison vial still unopened.*

Hiti. What's this?

Josi (*to* COSI). Ah, she'sh not done it!

Mrs. O. Done what?

Josi. She wash going to poishon hershelf, you shilly woman!

Cosi. What's all dis mean? (*Points to bridal preparations. Enter* YUNGLANGTSI, *gorgeously arrayed as a bridegroom.*) Where'sh my shecurity? (*Furiously.*) You were going to rob me, were you? You were going to steal a march on me!

Hank. Yes, a wedding march!

[*Pointing to* YUNGLANGTSI.

Cosi. My money! My money! Give me my money, or I sell you!

Mrs. O. You shan't have your money! You've stolen the girl yourself—you know you have!

Olang. Yes, they have stolen her! I can see it in their faces! Thieves! Thieves!

Mrs. O. They've taken her!

Cosi. I have not!

Mrs. O. She was here ten minutes ago!

Cosi (*losing all control*). And if I *had* taken her—I had a right to take her! She was my property! Yes, yes! What right had you to be marrying her to anyone? Dat was shtealing, dat was!

Mrs. O. You should have thought of that before!

Cosi. I'll sell you! I'll sell you still! Dere's de picture and the furniture!

[*At the word "picture"* OLANGTSI *shows perturbation; at the word "furniture"* MRS. OLANGTSI.

Olang. No, no! You mustn't take the picture! That's mine. Give me time and I'll pay!

Cosi. Time? Time? I'll show you what *time* is! Here—you dere outside—in wid you! (*Enter* BAILIFFS.) You see dat man? Well, he is a signed-on bankrupt; he is on contract to be sold!

Olang. You cannot!

Cosi. Oh, yes! Dis says "on demand." (*He shows document.*) Where is de gel?

Mrs. O. You've taken her!

Cosi. You do not deliver her—den I sell you!

Yung. (*who has been wandering heavy and indifferent from group to group, lights on his certificate with a cry of rapture*). Ah! (*All turn astonished*). Oh, my—my beautiful certificate! Mother! My certificate has come back again!

Olang. Ah, Tikipu has been here! He has come back to rob me! Where is Tikipu?

Cosi. Dere's de warrant to date. (*To* BAILIFFS.) Clear them out! Go and call de folk in from de street!

[BAILIFFS *enter house. One goes into the street with gong and clappers.*

Yung. Oh, mother! Now I needn't marry Meemee at all, need I? Now I can be a grocer again? Oh!

[*He weeps for joy, and sits fondling the certificate.*

Olang. You lout, you! You dreg, you sediment! Get up!

[*Kicks him.* YUNGLANGTSI *stays lost in the rapture of his discovery. In the street the crier is heard crying the sale.* STUDENTS *crowd round* MR. *and* MRS. OLANGTSI, *holding out their hands to be paid. They follow them about.*

Cosi. Josi, you know how to sell pictures at auction?

Josi. Shell dem? Dat depends.

Cosi. On de picture?

Josi. No; on what you pay me. At ten per shent I can shell pictures handsomely.

Cosi. Give you five.

Josi. Make it——

Cosi. Five.

[*Turns away from him.*

Josi. Very well. Give me the warrant. I shall shell it less handsomely, dat'sh all! . . . Yesh, dish shale is going to be an alarming sacrifice, Coshi. . . . Five per shent!

Crier (*nearer again*). A sale! A sale! A sale!

Josi. Yesh! A shale! Cry it louder! . . . Great shale of pictures, old furniture, and rattletraps! Change of business! Amazing bargains!

Alarming reductions! Heartrending sacrifice—at five per shent! Walk up, walk up, and shee de great shale dat is about to commence!

[*During this the* BAILIFFS *are carrying out the furniture.* MRS. OLANGTSI *falls upon them and beats them; she is hustled back, only to return to the charge.* YUNGLANGTSI *sits absorbed in the joy of his recovered certificate. Townsfolk crowd in to a final flourish of the gong.*

Cosi. Now den, Josi, begin.

Josi. Lot Number 1. Dis is a picture, gentlemen; some of you may not know it, but it is a picture. . . . It is a celebrated picture; you might not dink so, but it is celebrated. . . . It is a picture wid a shtory attached to it; dat makes it an intereshting picture. (*Interruption.*) What did de gentleman shay? . . . Quite right; noding else would. As dish is a warrant shale to shatisfy an order of claims, it ish not my business to shay anything more dan de truth. It ish my own broder I am shelling dish picture for. (*Consternation of* COSI.) Dat'sh why I only take five per shent commission; my usual charge ish ten. Yesh, Cosi, I'm your brother; I've got a shabby coat, but you've got a shabby shoul!

[*Uproarious amusement among the* STUDENTS *at* JOSI'S *revelation of relationship.* COSI *becomes the butt of jeers and laughter.*

Cosi. You give me back dat warrant!

Josi. Not for ten per shent, brother Coshi!

All. Broder Coshi!

Cosi. Ah, you shall pay for this! You see! Here, let me go!

[*Unable to endure the ridicule and exposure he slinks off.*

Josi (*raises his voice in victorious derision*). Going—going—at five per shent! Dat'sh right. Now, den, business! Any offer? . . . Don't be in a hurry, gentlemen . . . take your time! De picture is not going to run away; you can examine it, gentlemen, and shee dat dere is no deception. If dere ever wash any deception it was three hundred years ago when de man who painted it ran away from his creditors and pretended dat he had gone into de picture. Dere'sh de shtory for you—all complete. . . . Well? What offer? Won't anybody make any offer?

[OLANGTSI *pushes forward to bid.* STUDENTS *surround him and hold out their hands demanding money.*

Crier (*without*). Only ten sen! Only ten sen! Any buy?

Josi. Ten sen? Somebody offers ten sen. I presume dat he means ten yen? We'll call it ten yen; de picture's worth it.

Crier (*without*). Only ten sen! Only ten sen!

Josi. Very well, ten sen! Going at ten sen! Going—at . . . ten . . . sen! A picture dat ish dree hundred years old and still going strong! Now! Now is your chance! Dis will not happen again!

Olang. Ah! ah! ah!

[*At the word "going" the picture comes dimly to life. In a veiled indistinctness* WIOWANI *is seen seated within it.* OLANGTSI *sees, and lifts his hands and wails despairingly. The crowd stares, stolidly amazed.*

Voice (*without*). Only ten sen! Only ten sen!

Josi. Well? . . . What for you shtaring at me? *I* am not de picture! *Dere* is de picture: a beautiful picture dat shpeaks for itshelf! A *real* picture, wid a shtory in it dat may always come true. What? Will nobody give any more? Very well. At ten sen!—for dish time only—going at ten sen! Going, going. . . . (*He turns.*) Gone!

[*The picture vanishes.*

CURTAIN

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